System

‘I wanted something calm.’ Raf Simons

Issue No. 6 – £7 / €10 / $18

GUCCI

Dior
dior.com

Dior
dior.com

PRADA

PRADA

PRADA MILANO
PRADA
PRADA.COM

RALPH LAUREN
Collection

THE SHEARLING COLLECTION
RALPHLAUREN.COM

SUBJECTIVE REALITY

GIRLS APPROACHING CAR
EAST VILLAGE, NEW YORK, NY
STACY MARTIN, HAILEY GATES
BY STEVEN MEISEL

miu miu

SUBJECTIVE REALITY

EARLY MORNING SIDEWALK
NEW YORK, NY
STACY MARTIN, MIA GOTH
BY STEVEN MEISEL

miu miu

MIUMIU.COM
NO PARKING
BUS STOP
Take One
York

SUBJECTIVE REALITY

FOUR LADIES ON A BENCH
NEW YORK, NY
MIA GOTH, MADDISON BROWN, HAILEY GATES, STACY MARTIN
BY STEVEN MEISEL

miu miu

#ATRIBUTE
40 YEARS OF ARMANI
ARMANI.COM/ATRIBUTE

GIORGIO ARMANI

MONCLER
moncler.com

dior.com
j'adore
Dior
Touche de Parfum
The new fragrance ritual
#MAKEJADOREYOURS

6 PLACE VENDÔME

REPOSSI

PARIS

REPOSSI.COM

this ad
is *gender*
neutral

diesel.com

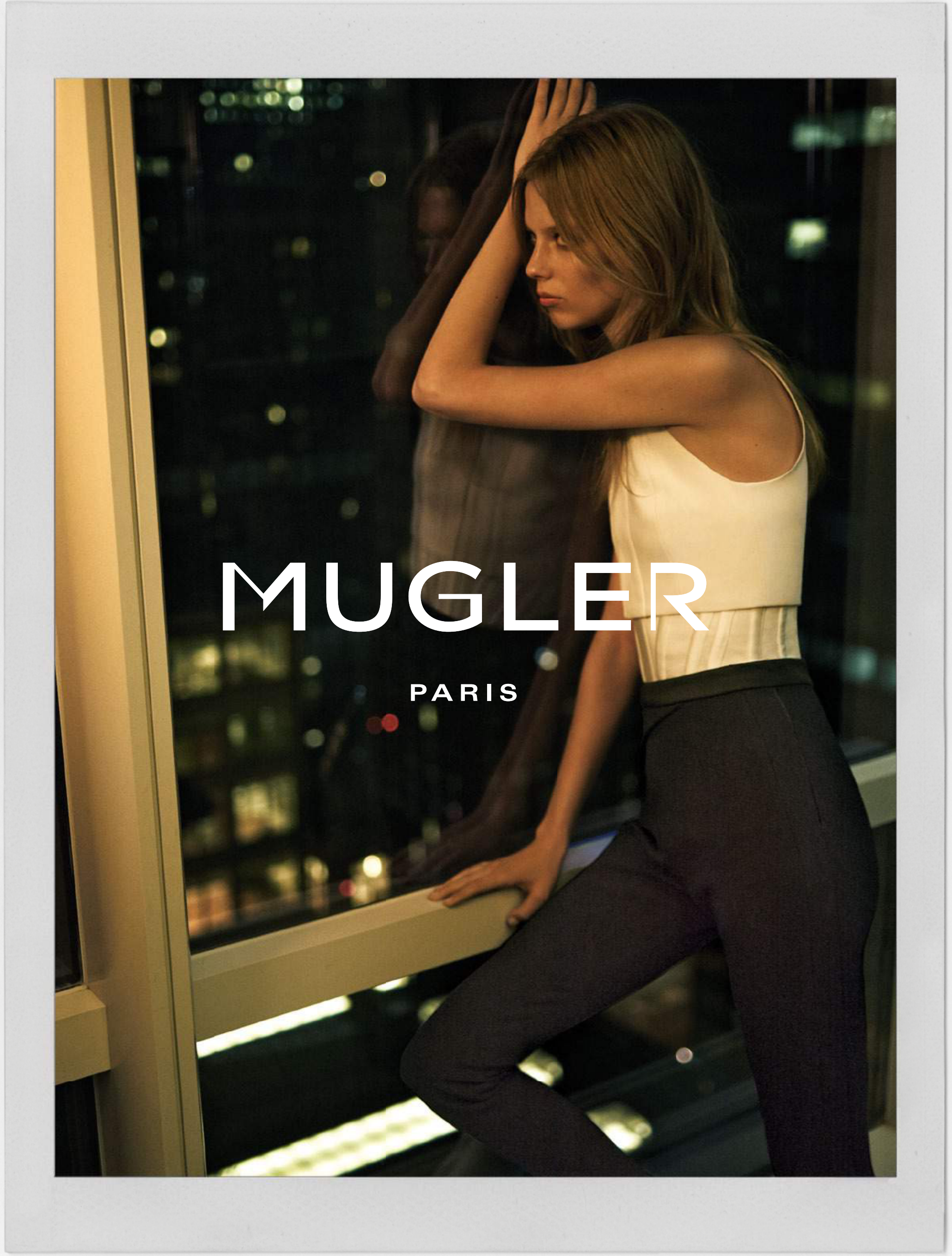
DIESEL

152–153 SLOANE STREET
LONDON SW1X 9BX

CHLOE.COM

© 2015 CHLOE. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

MUGLER.COM


MUGLER
PARIS

NINA RICCI
NINA RICCI

LIFE IS A BEAUTIFUL SPORT LACOSTE

SONIA
RYKIEL
PARIS
27-29 BROOK STREET +44 20 7493 5255 SONIARYKIEL.COM

vanessabruno

FALL WINTER COLLECTION 2015 / 16
WWW.VANESSABRUNO.COM

BARBARA CASASOLA

MARK BORTHWICK JULY 2015

DAVID MALLETT
Paris
www.david-mallett.com

Le Nouveau Chic
Galeries Lafayette

GALERIESLAFAYETTE.COM

WEDNESDAY Agency - 44 GL 552 116 329 RCS PARIS

Table of contents

58 More More More Dior.
By Cathy Horyn. Photographs by Juergen Teller.

194 A letter from... Beijing: Service not included.
By Hung Huang. Illustration by Jean-Philippe Delhomme.

196 A letter from... London: A class act.
By Edie Campbell. Illustration by Jean-Philippe Delhomme.

198 A letter from... New York: Style conscious.
By Burak Cakmak. Illustration by Jean-Philippe Delhomme.

200 Face à face. Parallel turns.
By Remo Ruffini & Thom Browne.

202 Behind the scenes. Faye McLeod & Dennis Freedman.
By Jonathan Wingfield.

226 Chronicles of retail. The Sixth Continent.
By Marion Hume.

234 The legendary... Hubert de Givenchy.
By Hans Ulrich Obrist. Photographs by Jamie Hawkesworth. Styling by Marie-Amélie Sauvé.

258 In the words of... Tavi Gevinson.
By Jonathan Wingfield. Photographs by Brigitte Lacombe.

270 Portfolio. François Berthoud.
By Thomas Lenthal. Illustrations by François Berthoud.

282 The collections. Print matters.
By David Owen.

326 Work in progress. Repossi x OMA.
By Jonathan Wingfield. Portraits by Willy Vanderperre.

338 The edit. Pre-collections.
By Alexander Fury. Photographs by Jamie Hawkesworth. Styling by Marie-Amélie Sauvé.

362 The Saint-Germain questionnaire. Julie de Libran.
By Loïc Prigent.

LOEWE

Steven Meisel
Untitled (Self-portrait #1)
2015

loewe.com

Contributors

Giovanni Bianco is from Brazil. He is a creative director and the owner of GB65. He resides between New York and São Paulo. When seeking inspiration, the book Giovanni always turns to is *O Rio de Janeiro* by Bruce Weber.

Burak Cakmak is from Turkey. He is the dean of the School of Fashion at Parsons in New York. When seeking inspiration, the book Burak always turns to is *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed* by Jared Diamond.

Edie Campbell is from London, England. She is a model who dabbles in writing to 'keep ze brain moving'. When seeking inspiration, the book Edie always turns to is *The Passion* by Jeanette Winterson: 'she can string a sentence together in a way that's at once effortless and the most perfect expression of everything you've ever felt about the world'.

Dennis Freedman is from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. He lives in New York and is the creative director of Barneys. When seeking inspiration, the book Dennis always turns to *William Eggleston's Guide*.

Tavi Gevinson is a writer and actress from Oak Park, Illinois. She lives in New York and is the editor in chief of Rookie. When seeking inspiration, Tavi always turns to *The Daniel Clowes Reader.*

Jamie Hawkesworth is a photographer from Ipswich in Suffolk, England. He lives in London. When seeking inspiration, Jamie always turns to an old William Eggleston Christies catalogue: 'it's incredible'.

Cathy Horyn is a writer from Coshocton, Ohio. She currently resides in the Hudson Valley, New York. When seeking inspiration, the book Cathy always turns to is *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald.

Marion Hume wasn't born in London but calls it home. She's a journalist and avid swimmer, and also works on art and philanthropic projects. When seeking inspiration, Marion always turns to *Swimming to Antarctica* by Lynne Cox: 'a tribute to the magnificence of the human body. And blimey, if she can do that, what are we whining about?'

Nikolas Koenig is from Frankfurt, Germany. He's an architectural photographer who shoots mostly residential and hospitality projects commercially, and land- and cityscapes for his personal work. He lives in New York. When seeking inspiration, Nikolas always turns to *The Stranger* by Albert Camus.

Faye McLeod is from Glasgow, Scotland. She resides between New York and Paris, and is the visual image director of the team designing windows, exhibitions and sets for Louis Vuitton, as well as windows for Dior. When seeking inspiration, the book Faye always turns to is *Mister G* by Gilbert Garcin.

Hans Ulrich Obrist is from Zurich, Switzerland. He lives in London and is the co-director of the Serpentine Galleries. When seeking inspiration, Hans Ulrich always turns to is *Mount Tamalpais* by Etel Adnan.

David Owen is from Suburbia. He lives in the Barbican, London, and runs IDEA Books with his partner Angela Hill. When seeking inspiration, the book David always turns to is *The Flower Shop* by Leonard Koren: 'it describes the day-to-day practice of the Blumenkraft florist in Vienna – I'm going to have to read it again now!'

Gaia Repossi is a designer from Turin, Italy who lives between Paris and Los Angeles. When seeking inspiration, the books Gaia always turns to are *S, M, L, XL* by Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau, and *Molloy* by Samuel Beckett.

Marie-Amélie Sauvé is from Paris, the city where she still lives and works as a creative, style and artistic consultant. The book she always to turns to when seeking inspiration is Sigmund Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams.*

LOEWE

Turquoise Suede V-Bag with Triangle Strap and Metal Chain, 2015

loewe.com

Masthead

Editorial Board
Alexia Niedzielski
Elizabeth von Guttman
Jonathan Wingfield
Thomas Lenthal

Art Director
Mathieu Perroud

Associate Editor
Rana Toofanian

Editorial Assistant
Thomas Prees

Coordination
Veronica Latourrette

Subeditor
Tom Ridgway

Layout
Antoine Seiter

Contributing Writers
Burak Cakmak, Edie Campbell, Alexander Fury, Cathy Horyn,
Hung Huang, Marion Hume, David Owen, Loïc Prigent.

Contributing Creatives
François Berthoud, Jean-Philippe Delhomme, Marie-Amélie Sauvé.

Contributing Photographers
Joe Fletcher, Steve Harries, Jamie Hawkesworth, Nikolas Koenig,
Brigitte Lacombe, Mario Palmieri, Juergen Teller, Willy Vanderperre.

Special Thanks to:
Olivier Bialobos, Thomas Bonnouvrier, Edward Brachfeld, Julie Brown, Sébastien Clivaz,
Kristen Dégardin, Floriane Desperier, Oliver Fiechter, Geoffroy Hassoun, Angela Hill,
Jeanne Hollande, Janet Johnson, Sven Kaufmann, Charles Levai, Therese Lundström,
Rozi Rexhepi, Georg Ruffles, Wolfgang Schmid, Charlotte Selignan, Violaine Willm, Karin Xiao.

Publisher
Tartan Publishing Ltd

System
Tartan Publishing Ltd, 29-31 Brewery Road,
London, N7 9QH, United Kingdom, +44 (0)20 7619 6617.

For subscriptions please visit
www.system-magazine.com

Follow System on Instagram
@systemmagazine

Distribution by COMAG, Tavistock Works, Tavistock Road, West Drayton, UB7 7QX, UK, +44 (0)18 9543 3811.

Colour reproduction and print supervision by LBH labs.
Printed and bound by Grafica Nappa Srl
in Aversa, Italy.

© 2015 Reproduction is strictly prohibited
without permission from the publishers.

ISSN No.: 2052-0808

For more information,
please contact info@system-magazine.com
or visit www.system-magazine.com

LOEWE

Fall Winter 2015 2016

loewe.com

It was all going so well.

Raf Simons had graciously spent the past six months, on and off, discussing life at Dior for this issue of *System*. Cathy Horyn's resulting piece presented a designer coming to terms with the ever-increasing demands of heading up one of fashion's most monumental institutions – and the ever-decreasing time he had in which to conjure up newness, countless times a year. We even had a title for it: 'More More More Dior'.

And then came the announcement that Raf Simons had chosen to leave the house of Dior. With half of our pages already printed (that original title still appears on the contents page), we pressed 'pause', asked Cathy to write an epilogue, and sat down to reread what Raf had said in the interviews, searching for traces of the deliberation that was clearly in his thoughts, if not his words.

With hindsight (that most revealing, yet futile of prisms through which to observe a situation), the intimacy of the piece offers a window into a man questioning his situation, his life, his future. At one point, Raf asks the question – as much to himself – 'How do you pull away from all this tension in your professional life? Do you buy a house and start doing pottery?'

Well, we half-jokingly thought to ourselves pre-announcement, pottery's gain would certainly be fashion's immense loss. At the time of the comment, Cathy responded in *faux*-firm and affectionate tones: 'Don't do pottery, Raf'.

And as she has just now suggested, several hours after hearing the news of his departure, 'We really should learn to take Raf at his word'.

GIVENCHY
PARIS

GIVENCHY.COM

‘I wanted something calm.’

Raf Simons on his final six months at Dior.

By Cathy Horyn
Photographs by Juergen Teller

Raf Simons' career can be divided into two distinct parts. In the first, beginning in 1995, he was menswear designer with a romantic obsession with youth and an equally strong modern view of fashion. A Raf Simons show could *imply* a world – whether through its street casting, or an idealism expressed in school uniforms, the slim black suit of the late 1950s dandy or the discontents of a new-wave fringe group. That was Raf's great gift: to put his mind to a truth about young men and then marshal relatively simple forms around it. Over and over he did that.

Then, in 2005, Raf went to Jil Sander to design men's and women's fashion. On the strength of a handful of collections that refreshed the notion of minimalism, his reputation soared. In March 2012, Raf was hired by Dior as artistic director. Although to editors he was a surprising choice – wasn't he a minimalist? – anyone who had followed the first part of Raf's career knew that he possessed the very qualities needed at a Paris couture house in the 21st century. He was a master team builder, an engine of ideas, and an extremely competitive man who likes to be first. At Dior, he quickly won admirers, not least in its ateliers, as demand for Dior's modernized fashion grew by leaps.

> 'Every collection is now done in three weeks. When I think back to the first couture show, in July 2012, I was concerned because we only had eight weeks.'

Still and all, Raf could never have imagined the pace at which he would be working at Dior. Six major shows a year – two haute-couture, two ready-to-wear, a cruise, and a separate show in December to compete with Chanel's Métiers d'Arts[1] presentation the same month. Nor, indeed, could anyone a decade ago have imagined the changes that would sweep the fashion world, changes that have forced everyone to work harder and faster. This is the 'system' that people complain about. But Raf has actually adapted and thrived – perhaps to his own surprise.

And that has been the subject we've been discussing over a six-month period: How does the system work at Dior?

The day before his Fall ready-to-wear show, in early March, Raf is overseeing fittings in a salon at Dior. Two tables are set up at one end of the large room, with six or seven assistants around one table, and Raf and his right hand, Pieter Mulier, along with their friend, the journalist Jo-Ann Furniss, at the other. Plates of chocolate and fruit are set out. For couture, Raf uses a many-windowed studio – the same once used by John Galliano. But for ready-to-wear, he and the team sprawl in this sedate dove-grey salon, with racks of clothes (most still with basting threads) along one wall and accessories on the opposite, and models walking in between as Raf assesses each. Sometimes the milliner Stephen Jones stops by, or the music producer Michel Gaubert, and they will watch the scene while standing against the back wall. The atmosphere is similar to that of the Chanel studio: open, relaxed, with Raf, like Karl Lagerfeld, keeping tabs on everything. The difference is perhaps that Raf prefers to have fewer distractions.

He taps a remote control and suddenly the room fills with a hard electronic beat. A model in a minidress with a chain-mesh collar begins to walk, then stops as an assistant removes the collar and looks back at Raf.

'I think it's better without,' he says. 'OK, we're going to photograph her. And then we're going to put her in the black boot – to double-check.'

I remark that the swirling patterns (an abstraction of animal spots) of the models' bodysuits recall the pop prints in his January couture show, and I ask if ready-to-wear follows its themes.

'A little bit,' he says, hesitating. 'In terms of the silhouette, yes, and also the attitude. Couture was about this kind of mixing of three decades that sit close together – the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s. The 1950s for the Dior kind of thing; the 1960s for its romantic ideal of the future; the 1970s for its sexual freedom. And what came out of that were some things we wanted to push further for ready-to-wear. Also, our younger clients would like to see things go further.'

He pauses and addresses the assistant: 'Change the black boots'.

I'm struck by how linear and clean the silhouette looks.

'I just think, after three years, we should be able to bring Dior to where we want,' he says, 'whether it's the shape, the colours, or the materials. Or a conceptual approach or a story approach. When I *feel* it, I will always very much go into the heritage silhouette. But it feels now like a moment to push away that idea and allow other, new things to come in – just as we did in the January couture. Otherwise, you *always* end up doing a full skirt and the Bar jacket[2]. All the tailoring this time is not Bar, whereas in the [Esprit Dior Pre-Fall 2015] Tokyo show[3], it was *all* Bar.'

He adds, 'When I first started at Dior, the ready-to-wear did not feed off the couture. And now it does, because couture is only for 300 clients and because the reaction to the couture shows is so much better. The clothes are more contemporary, for one thing.'

'So the customers want more newness?'

'Yes,' he says, slowly. 'And no.'

He has cranked up the music and a model, in for a go-see, begins snaking down the carpet. Pieter and an assistant are reaching for a pair of ankle boots from a group on the floor.

'Well, this brand can't get stuck in its heritage,' Raf continues, still watching the model. 'Because everything goes so much faster today. At Jil Sander, it took us five or six years to get out of that minimal, monastic silhouette. Here at Dior, it has taken us less than three years to make the change. I didn't expect it, either. But when you do six shows a year the evolution is faster than at a house that only does two shows. The customer gets used to seeing more.'

He looks at Pieter. 'She needs to be seen with different coats. And let's see the brown boots with the green heel. Yes, beautiful. Lighter.'

> 'Sometimes I'd like to talk about this with Karl Lagerfeld. He's been in it so many years – there must be a structure to how he works at Chanel.'

The day after the Dior show, Raf and I meet for lunch at a restaurant near Avenue Montaigne. He has had some sleep, but not enough to counteract the pace of the previous few days. The show was held in a modernistic tent in the Cour Carrée of the Louvre, with more than 1,000 guests. The standout was the tailoring, in particular the lean, dropped-shoulder coats, worn at times over boldly printed bodysuits or a minidress. What the collection lacked in classic Dior romance it made up for in modern ease. And the coats would have no equal during the Fall season.

'You know, we did this collection in three weeks,' he tells me, not defending the show but, rather, stating the reality that now faces high-fashion houses. 'Tokyo was also done in three weeks. Actually everything is done in three weeks, maximum five. And when I think back to the first couture show for Dior, in July 2012, I was concerned because we only had eight weeks.'

He smiles. 'And now we never have time like that. And you know? It's clearly possible to do it, if I have my ideas together. The machine is there. Of course, we have to push really hard. It's not like we think the ideas and mushrooms come out of the ground.'

He thinks for a moment and says, 'Sometimes I'd like to talk with Karl Lagerfeld. He's been in it so many years – there must be a structure to how he works at Chanel. I mean, I cannot imagine that he's working at the rhythm and tempo that Pieter and I are working at. I cannot believe it. It's not possible. I can't believe he's working on collections from 10 in the morning until 11 or 12 at night.'

'You might be surprised,' I say. 'He starts very early in the morning – at home – sketching. He puts things into motion from there. He also has Virginie Viard, his right hand. You can't underestimate her role. And I've seen him in the Chanel and Fendi studios late at night. So…'

Raf nods. I think he knows that a conversation with Karl might yield many valuable things, but not necessarily the answer he is seeking. Everybody has to choose a method for himself, though certainly he and Karl are in a unique boat: they alone do six big shows a year, two involving the extra precision of haute couture. And, as almost everyone in fashion knows, there's a rivalry between LVMH and Chanel. That's pressure in itself.

Some months ago Raf mentioned that he wanted to create a new studio structure at Dior, so I ask him about that.

'When you do six shows a year, there's not enough time for the whole process,' he explains. 'Technically, yes – the people who make the samples, do the stitching, they can do it. But you have no incubation time for ideas, and incubation time is very important. When you try an idea, you look at it and think, Hmm, let's put it away for a week and think about it later. But that's never possible when you have only one team working on all the collections.'

'Also,' he goes on, 'what people forget is that when you do a runway show, it eats time away from your schedule. Just the prep time before a show is six or seven days, especially when you are showing abroad – '

'So you're constantly creating,' I say, 'with no time.'

'But I have no problem with the continuous creative process,' he says. 'Because it's the reason I'm in this world. It's always happening. I just did a show yesterday. Just now, while waiting in the car, I sent four or five ideas to myself by text message, so I don't forget them. They are always coming.'

'Like what? Tell me one.'

He shrugs. 'Stupid things. I was just thinking about this kind of very masculine tailoring you see in the navy. It can be stupid things, like a certain button. But I've been doing this my whole life. The problem is when you have only one design team and six collections, there is no more thinking time. And I don't want to do collections where I'm not thinking. In this system, Pieter and I can't sit together and brainstorm – no time. I have a schedule every day that begins at 10 in the morning and runs through the day, and every, every minute is filled. From 10.10am to 10.30am, it's shoes, let's say. From 10.30 to 11.15, it's jewellery. Everything is timed – the whole week. If there's a delay in a meeting, the whole day is fucked up.'

He looks at me intently. 'What are you going to do? Walk out of the office at 8 o'clock at night? No, of course not. So you stay there until midnight. That's the life. So we created two design teams. Each group has a person in charge, and these people are fantastic. If Team A is working on cruise, then Team B is working July couture. Then Team A will start working on the Fall ready-to-wear show. So each group does one couture show and one ready-to-wear show.'

'How many people on a team?'

'I've no problem with the continuous creative process. It's always happening. Just now, while waiting in the car, I texted four or five ideas to myself.'

'Purely designers? About seven or eight.'

After some direction from Raf, a team will begin gathering research – mood boards, books. He and Pieter will then choose things they feel are worth developing. I ask Raf how often the starting point is clear to him.

'Tokyo, for instance, was very clear. I wanted everything in the Bar jacket shape, but I wanted everything urban, like Stone Island,' he says, referring to Massimo Osti's utilitarian label, and the Stone Island book[4]. 'Away with all the lady material! Just rough, rough, rough. So it was clear for the team. There was the silhouette and the materials. That show was driven by the materials, like waxed cotton. When a collection is more story-like, it's a bit more complicated.

'With the Tokyo collection, we had the idea a long time and then we were ready to use it. That's very often the case with me, though. By nature, I'm not scared, but I'm just aware of the environment and when it's a good moment. I'm patient. I also respect that some people may not be immediately ready for an idea. Not everybody has the same way of adapting to newness – whether it's art or fashion.'

Anyway, he says, 'Tokyo was the first collection where we worked in the two teams, so there was a bit of stress. I took a page from the Stone Island book – of a guy in a huge brown waxed coat – and I just cut the coat into the shape of the Bar. I cut his head off and replaced it with a woman's, and I said to everybody, "This is what we're going to do". It was so clear.'

At Jil Sander, I recall, he used to sit with his team brainstorming ideas.

'I did that very often,' he says. 'And when the shows were running, I would sit with the whole creative team at a big table and have a dialogue. "What have you seen?" "What do you find modern? Old?" At first everyone would sit there with their mouths full of teeth and a rat face, but after a while they loved it. It became a real dialogue. And I liked it very much.'

'But can you do that at Dior?'

'Not at all,' he replies, shaking his head. 'Sometimes I do it with Pieter and maybe the heads of the teams. But the groups are too big here. There is also something else. At Dior, the moment you say, "This is an interesting thing to try", things go very, very fast.'

In other words, the efficiency of Dior's ateliers, not to mention the expertise of its 75 seamstresses and tailors, helps to move the design process along, which makes everyone involved more proficient, but leaves little time or room for second options.

We have finished our lunch and Raf is heading back to his office on the Avenue Montaigne. 'So, in spite of the incredible pressures, your system seems to work?' I ask.

He nods. 'Technically speaking, it works. Does it work for me emotionally? No, because I'm not the kind of person who likes to do things so fast. I think if I had more time, I would reject more things, and bring other ideas or concepts in. But that's also not necessarily better. Sometimes you can work things to death when you take too much time.'

'People are used to processing information much more quickly now, thanks to technology,' I say. 'Also, shows are about communicating to large audiences, often via social media. In any age, isn't the point to master the changes around you?'

'Maybe,' he says, and with a laugh adds, 'Fashion became pop. I can't make up my mind if that's a good or a bad thing. The only thing I know is that it used to be elitist. And I don't know if one should be ashamed or not to admit that maybe it was nicer when it was more elitist, not for everybody. Now high fashion is for everybody.'

'I think if I had more time, I would reject more things, but that's also not necessarily better. Sometimes you can work things to death.'

A few weeks later I hear from Raf again. It is a Friday evening (his time), and he is with his driver travelling from Antwerp to Paris. Sheepishly, he reveals that he was leaving the next day to spend the weekend at Disneyland Paris with his boyfriend. Hearing my snort, he chuckles and says, 'I actually like that kind of thing, believe it or not.'

I don't, but decide to leave it. During his first two years at Dior, Raf rarely took breaks. He would work nonstop for four or five weeks, running up to Antwerp to check on his own business, and then he'd be back in the grind of Paris – and complaining that he didn't have a normal life. So the news that he had done something about it was positive. He said he had been spending weekends with his boyfriend's large family in the south of France, exploring villages and just hanging out.

'It changes everything now.' He then recalls a visit to a private zoo. 'They have this kind of antelope,' he says, and he pronounces it an-TEE-lope, which adds to the childlike wonderment. 'They have kangaroos. They have black swans. They have ostriches and pink flamingos. But, I'm telling you, 300 pink flamingos next to that landscape, and 150 black swans, and many kangaroos' – he clicks his tongue – 'it was incredible. And there was almost no one there.'

Somehow we get into a discussion about the 'State of Fashion' – the noise, the crowded multiplex of brands, the rise of bluntly commercial clothes. *Where is it all going?*

I tell him I think the question is a waste of time.

'I've obviously stepped back from the fashion world because of my book,' I say. 'I spend most of my time in the late 19th century and early 20th century, when fashion was new and all the writing about it was new. I've learned, for sure, that everything moves in a 20-year cycle. And right now we're in this collision of what a consumer culture wants and what the luxury business can deliver – and how quickly it can deliver. It's like an earthquake. You simply cannot see over the turmoil. Nobody can. Still, everybody's predicting. I wouldn't even bother. You just have to wait until the rumbling stops.'

Raf remains silent, so I continue.

'I actually think that what you do and what Karl does at Chanel makes the *only* sense. You focus on the problems you have in front of you. How to make your studios work more efficiently? How to produce six shows a year and make them vital. You answer *those* questions. To me, this makes the most sense. The journalists don't know what to do with that larger question anyway. And I don't want to waste my time with it. Consumers also don't care.

'You know,' I say, 'there is no more regular print edition of *Women's Wear Daily*. After more than 100 years the newspaper is finished.'

'Wow, I hadn't heard that,' Raf replies. 'My god.' He seems to mull this over and then says, 'I've been talking to Sterling [artist Sterling Ruby[5]] a lot about some of these things. Can ideas only work within existing systems? That's what I wonder. I'm in a very well-defined system, obviously. But are there other situations or places where this might not be true? For example, Sterling and I took a lot of emotional satisfaction from the collaboration we did together.' In autumn 2013, the two friends created a one-off collection that reflected their separate ideas about fashion and art, and also the ideas they have in common.

'I think it worked because it was so unconnected to anything we had ever done before,' he continues, 'even though it still involved fashion and art. In a way, it was not the same as doing one of many, many collections, or one of many, many art exhibitions.'

'It was an exhilarating show,' I say. 'So free in its thinking.'

'But can an approach like that exist by itself, and survive?'

'No, it can't survive,' I say. 'It's absolutely contrary to the existing fashion system, which wants stuff it can repeat again and again.'

Raf pauses and, after a moment, says, 'Everything is so easily accessible, and because of that you don't make a lot of effort anymore. When we were young, you had to make up your mind to investigate something – because it took time. You really had to search and dig deep. Now if something interests you, one second later, you can have it. And also one second later you also drop it.'

One of my all-time favourite things that Raf ever did was a video called *16, 17 How to Talk to Your Teen*. Shot in 1996, in lieu of a show, when he probably had little money, it featured guys and girls bunking off from school or work to ride their skateboards around Antwerp. It perfectly captured the feeling of being young – an obsession of Raf's at that time – and it came from a very sincere place. I saw the video for the first time in 2004, and it has stayed with me since.

I mention the video to Raf. ‘It was done out of real curiosity and freedom,’ I say, adding, ‘Not unlike the show with Sterling.’

‘In that moment, you’re very eager to get a lot of reaction and you want it to lead to something,’ he replies. ‘You start thinking, How can it become a structure and system? And what you don’t realize is that if it evolves and evolves, it’s actually going to take you away from the time that you could spend researching and thinking about something in depth. You don’t know that at the beginning.

‘And now, sometimes, I think, How can you get back to that state? And maybe you can’t. It was connected to so many things from that time. I find that very complicated.’

‘But don’t you think the show with Sterling was a kind of opening?’ I ask. ‘Why does everything in fashion – or art – have to be sustainable? Why not do something that takes two years to create, and not two weeks? Maybe present the results in a remote place. I’ve always said that some of your best shows have been done outdoors. I know this is harder today because of security and crowds. But it would be fun to think about. Having the impulse is important.’

> ‘Fashion became pop. And I don’t know if one should be ashamed or not to admit that maybe it was nicer when it was more elitist.’

Raf suddenly lets out a grunt. ‘You should see us here. We left Antwerp two hours ago and were supposed to arrive in Paris at 8.30 tonight. But we’re in a traffic jam, and won’t arrive until 9.50. I’m supposed to meet someone for dinner.

‘This is the feeling I have all the time,’ he continues, clearly exasperated. ‘There’s never enough time. You get a tension. I know how to pull out from this in my personal life. We go and look at nature for three hours. It’s heaven. We go to a bakery and buy a bag of stuff and lie in the grass. *Sublime.* But how to do that in the context of your professional life? You buy a house and you start doing pottery or something?’

He sighs.

‘Don’t do pottery, Raf,’ I say.

In May, we speak again. He had hoped to show Dior’s cruise collection in Los Angeles. So far, he has shown in Monaco and New York, with the expeditionary forces of the fashion press following. But there was a snag in the L.A. plans, so he shifted to the Côte d’Azur, specifically, Le Palais Bulles, a glorious, utopian, cliff-hanging house that belongs to Pierre Cardin. The Bubble Palace is another Raf obsession; I’ve heard him talk about it for years, never imagining that he’d show there. A sprawling compound, its round pinkish surface sprouts more round and oval shapes, like the suckers of an octopus.

‘In many ways it is a form of architecture you cannot connect to another,’ Raf tells me. ‘It is more human than rational; individual and playful.’

I ask him how the collection is progressing, and am not surprised when he says it is nearly finished.

‘It’s very Dior,’ he explains. ‘You know, I have to say they are super satisfied at Dior, but if there’s one time I don’t do a Bar jacket, they let me know.’ He laughs. ‘I mean, they don’t pressure me or anything. But on purpose I didn’t do a Bar jacket in the March ready-to-wear collection – because the Tokyo show [in December] featured the Bar. And I felt that if you already offer the style six times a year, maybe it’s good to do something different.

‘For cruise, we’re doing quite a lot of Bar jackets, but not exactly as you’ve seen them before. There’s a lot of new materials. Mini checks. Pleats with floral prints. Weird, fresh colours… ’

‘What about the skirts?’

‘It’s difficult to explain,’ Raf says. ‘If a coat from Dior is 100 percent, and you take away 20 percent, that portion becomes a skirt. If you cut everything from the knee to the waist, and you keep that kind of volume, with the overlaps, then that is the skirt. There’s also a lot of knitwear. I work now with the two girls I worked with at Jil – that is really heaven.

‘There’s also a little story that you could say is a marriage between a bathing suit and an evening dress. The starting point for the collection was to have something like workwear – an overall, for example. But how can workwear grab the aesthetic of Dior and also have the same functionality? And be made with the minimum amount of fabric and still be covered? For me, the collection is very sweet and young.’

‘So you’ve already given the other design team the direction for the July couture?’ I ask. ‘Have they started work?’

‘Yes. They began doing the research and then I went through everything to find what was interesting.’

‘And do you have a clear direction at this point?’

‘Yes, couture is going to be about Flemish primitives.’ He says this with energy, as if he has been storing up the idea for some time. In fact, certain collections hold more fascination for him than others, and I could tell this was the former. Naturally I think of the milky Flemish colours and the more homey scenes, but he seems to anticipate that, and cuts me off.

‘It’s a big challenge in my head,’ he says, as if he has read my thoughts. ‘Well, it has a lot of the colours of the paintings, but I don’t want it to be only that. In the end, in fact, I don’t want people to be able to guess what the inspiration was.

‘In those paintings a lot of the clothing was just a drape to make the painting look good. There were a lot of garments, of course, but also some unfinished fabrics. It made me think of how the process in an atelier happens, too. You find pictures of Christian Dior in the studio doing exactly that kind of thing, working with a piece of fabric. So in my head I’m analysing all the phases that go into making a collection. One collection that I’m really looking at is by Martin Margiela – the one with the fur wigs by the Bless girls[6]. Do you know that one?’

I confess I don’t. But, in 1997, apparently low on funds, Margiela created an ingenious collection using leftover fabrics, with the models wearing underpinnings that made their bodies look like the taut canvas forms of a Stockman dummy. The clothes looked half-finished – and all the more lovely and modern for it. Also, there were substantial coats in the collection, oversized, some missing sleeves, and they easily related to something historical, though just what was hard to identify.

> ‘How do you pull away from all this tension in your professional life? Do you buy a house and start doing pottery or something?’

‘That was a masterful, masterful show for me,’ says Raf. ‘I always thought of it as “Flemish primitives”. Anyway, the July couture collection is hard to explain, and it’s still in the early stages. But when you look at a painting, it’s a pose. It’s a still. My question is, How can you think about that and make it very dynamic and very modern? We already did one couture collection linked to different centuries. So I thought, OK, this could be the biggest challenge for me yet in couture.’

Personally, I am struck by how far Raf has come since his debut show at Dior in summer 2012, a show that featured separate rooms lined with masses of fresh flowers and which was captured in the documentary *Dior and I*. You could of course see the connections to Margiela and the Flemish painters, mainly Hieronymus Bosch’s *The Garden of Earthly Delights*[7], a key reference. But for me the show transmitted a dazzling sense of freedom and imagination, not only in the variety of coats – some with a single, wide fur sleeve, others more like cloaks – but also in the serene, very plain floor-length dresses in white organza and in the fresh combinations of colours. Like many of Raf’s shows, the clothes were open to interpretation: the cloaks evoked both Poiret in the 1910s and Yamamoto in the 1980s, as well as capes that Raf did in a late 1990s men’s show. By the September shows in New York, you could see his influence everywhere, especially those extravagant sleeves and white dresses.

Later, Raf tells me, ‘We have to experiment in couture. You know, in the beginning at Dior I didn’t think like that. Now I think it’s very interesting in couture to experiment.’

I point out that he and his design team also had more time to work on the July couture show, since cruise was pretty much done in late April.

Raf gives a dry laugh. ‘Yeah, but it’s *still* really heavy. What annoys me more, psychologically, is the Antwerp situation – because my own men’s collection sits in the middle of our Dior schedule and there’s no structure in Antwerp. There’s no pattern department. Things take weeks to be made, and often they come back with mistakes.’ He pauses. ‘That’s the incredible part about Dior. If the direction is there, then the work will come very smoothly. The people in the ateliers make it happen.’

In some respects, Raf’s thought processes and his method of working have not changed over the past 20 years. He has always been good at breaking down an idea, simply and directly, and in trusting his instincts. But a theme common to some of his early men’s shows was the power of the individual to shape his world – as Raf himself has done. This notion was at the heart of his *History of My World*[8] show, in July 2004, a personal turning point for him. Not long after, he was hired at Jil Sander, his talent now on display in the larger arena of women’s fashion.

So I wonder how this notion of the individual fares in the new system of big brands and teams. Have Raf’s feelings been necessarily tempered? And is this idea still considered a virtue? I ask two people close to him: Furniss, who has known Raf for about 15 years and who works on texts for him at Dior, and stylist Olivier Rizzo, who Raf regards as a brother.

Jo-Ann Furniss: It's that delicate balance of being yourself and having other people be themselves as well, but also in tune with your ideas. You can see that in his collaboration with Sterling Ruby. At Dior, it's most evident in the haute couture. The collections are as much about the men and women in the ateliers as they are about Raf. But *he* makes that possible.

Lately I've been reading a lot about Hollywood's Golden Age. Who today would be the equivalent of those great studio bosses? And I thought, It's the designers. I mean, movie studios are no longer run by a boss. They don't have that individual style – when you could tell a Paramount picture from a Columbia picture. Well, that's what designers are now – these great impresarios running these huge things, that have this identity and impact on people's lives in a dream-like way. With designers like Raf and Karl and Miuccia Prada, you get these incredible *characters*. They are not conventional. And that difference comes out in everything that happens in their houses. The pressures sound gruelling to people on the outside. But that insanity also worked for the movies. Out of that insanity came some of the great classic movies.

Olivier Rizzo: After Jil Sander, going to a house with Dior's level of possibilities was the logical next step for Raf. You always want more for him. He is someone who needs creative challenges in life. For me, the Tokyo show really set the vision for *who* he is and what his vision for Dior is – what a big global luxury brand can and should be in 2015. You sensed that again at the July couture show. I think it all felt kind of effortless – his evolution from one level, to another step, to another show, to more shows, to shows abroad. I kind of feel it all happened smoothly. Of course we all know that it was not effortless. It took a lot of work and discipline and delegation.

You feel a hand throughout all of Raf's designs, for Dior or his own men's label. You feel a sensibility. In that sense, if you look at his total career, you see that he was born a couturier. It's actually what he has always done in menswear: couture for men. From the beginning. He has always worked on the body, the way a real couturier does. And I don't think Raf even realizes this, because he works so instinctively. You know, he never has any restrictions for himself. His mind is totally open and free. That's why, if you look at the total line of his work, it's incredible to put some of the early Raf Simons looks, next to Dior couture, next to Jil Sander women's looks. Only very, very strong designers have that – a certain sensibility.

Cathy Horyn: So, despite the extreme pressures of the system, he still exerts his individuality. Raf, as you know, often complains that it would be easier to do three shows a year, like some of his peers. But maybe that's just a case of 'the grass is always greener on the other side'…

Olivier: It's a little bit of that.

Cathy: Because he also admits that having more time to work on a collection doesn't necessarily mean it will be better. You can work something to death…

Olivier: I'm actually really happy that he said that. The fact that you're forced to rely on your instincts is often what makes the work interesting.

'I like the idea of doing something very calming in the midst of what I think in fashion is now one huge mess, a melting pot of overdone clothes.'

On October 2, a blue-sky day, Raf presents Dior's Spring 2016 ready-to-wear show, back in the Cour Carrée of the Louvre. A small mountain of sod and delphiniums – some 300,000 blue and white stems – confronts guests as they enter the cobbled courtyard. Most of Dior's shows have had a flower theme, but this set is on a bigger scale. The mountain appears to crash through the white-box show space, so that one side of the delphinium-covered hill looms over the audience. In his heart of hearts, Raf might have preferred an actual pastoral setting, but such a trek wouldn't be realistic. Besides, the hill is in its own way beautiful, a blue oddity in the midst of the monumental public space.

Work on the collection has gone smoothly, and though Raf and Pieter and other members of the team have been in the studio until the early hours of the morning, they don't look tired when I see them backstage, as the models begin to line up.

'Light, light, light,' says Raf of the collection, much of it done in sheer white organdie, filled with delicate, scallop-edge dresses and shorts evoking underwear. Some of the pieces evoke styles from the July couture show, like the fluttery under-layers of pleats and, of course, the hint of lingerie, a story he actually began a year ago with white sack dresses that vaguely suggested a Victorian night shirt.

But fundamentally the Spring clothes are more about a respite. 'I wanted to do something very calm,' he says. 'I like the idea of doing something very calming in the midst of what I think in the fashion world is now one huge mess, a melting pot of overdone clothes.' Certainly the white dresses and skirts, or a lovely, loose-fitting sleeveless black coat dress with pleating, force you to look more carefully at the details than a garment with glossy fringe or embroidery might. There is a lot of that in the Spring collections, stuff that immediately grabs the eye online.

'For me, it's more interesting if you have to look closely at something,' Raf tells me. 'Then it's purely about the construction and the outline, not the presence of print or jacquard. It may sound very simple, but it's not. When you're working with just transparent organza – hmm, well, try to make it great.' He laughs. 'The pleating in this collection is really incredible, though it isn't obvious. Some of the pieces took eight or nine days, because controlling the pleating on that light material is difficult.'

We have come to the end of our conversation. It is clear to me that Raf has mastered a complex system even if he has reservations about its logic. He will always be self-critical, a quality that helps any designer. He is also honest. I raise the question about individuality, referring back to the 2004 men's show, the same question I had put to Furniss and Rizzo.

Does he feel, even with the creative measures he has installed at Dior – the two-studio system – that the power of the individual can still come through in a major fashion house?

The answer is not so straightforward, he says, because there will always be commercial responsibilities you can't ignore. But, no, Raf says, 'I am not able to express myself the full way I would wish to. I would be more extreme.'

On October 22, just three weeks after his Spring hillock show, Simons announces he is leaving Dior. The news is delivered in a brief press statement from Dior, with a quote only from Simons, who says, in part, 'It is a decision based entirely and equally on my desire to focus on other interests in my life, including my own brand, and the passions that drive me outside of my work'. He thanks in particular Bernard Arnault, the chairman of LVMH, and the 'heartfelt management' of Sidney Toledano, Dior's chief executive. And that's that. There is no drama, no gossip, no court intrigue – because there isn't any. In spite of the benefits to both Dior and its 47-year-old designer – a 60-percent increase in sales since 2011; the experience of working with incredible artisans – one man has made up his own mind. Perhaps that is the most remarkable thing about the news.

Looking back over the past six months of conversation, I see signs that Simons had deeper doubts about the system of a big couture house than he allowed himself to show. Again and again, he returned to the subject of time, especially the lack of time to think. The measures he took to deal with the pressures, like the two studio set-up, didn't alleviate the problem entirely. And thinking about Jo-Ann Furniss' comment about 'impresarios' – well, I loved her analogy, but I realize now that it doesn't accurately describe Simons or his ambitions. He doesn't have that kind of ego. He doesn't care. He's interested in creating things that are genuinely good or genuinely shocking, not in erecting fairy-tale mountains.

I also think he was deadly earnest about the Spring collection (his last for Dior) and it being calm. I didn't appreciate the remark in the moment. He went on to say, 'I think a lot of collections focus on what is possible to please the eye very easily'. That statement could apply to big shows with elaborate sets or to clothes that must look *instantly* appealing on a tiny mobile screen. Both situations are a contemporary reality, and both require a great deal of manipulation – throwing embroideries onto an outfit, making stuff out of injection-moulded plastic. And everybody seems to go along with that approach, unquestioningly.

But, by leaving, Simons is saying that a designer doesn't have to accept that scenario. It's a choice, for those who are brave enough or strong enough to make it.

Some people find his decision sad. But for me it is a complete affirmation of all the things he has quietly said over the years, and of life. After all, do we really want designers staying in houses forever, until the grave? On the day of the announcement, Simons is out and about in Paris. He goes to the opening of Sterling Ruby's exhibition, and then to dinner with friends.

---

1. Chanel has held its Métiers d'Art shows for 11 years. The annual shows visit – and pay homage to – the different workshops that supply Chanel with materials such as buttons or wool. Shows have been held in Mumbai, Dallas, Edinburgh and, most recently in December 2014, Salzburg.

2. The Bar Suit is considered as the key piece of the 1947 collection that Christian Dior called 'La Ligne Corolle' and the press called the 'New Look'. The jacket with its trademark cinched waist required 3.7 metres of silk shantung. The full suit cost 59,000 francs or €3,248 (corrected for inflation).

3. The show was held in Tokyo, at Kokugikan, the national sumo-wrestling stadium, on December 11, 2014. Artificial snow fell on the stage throughout the show.

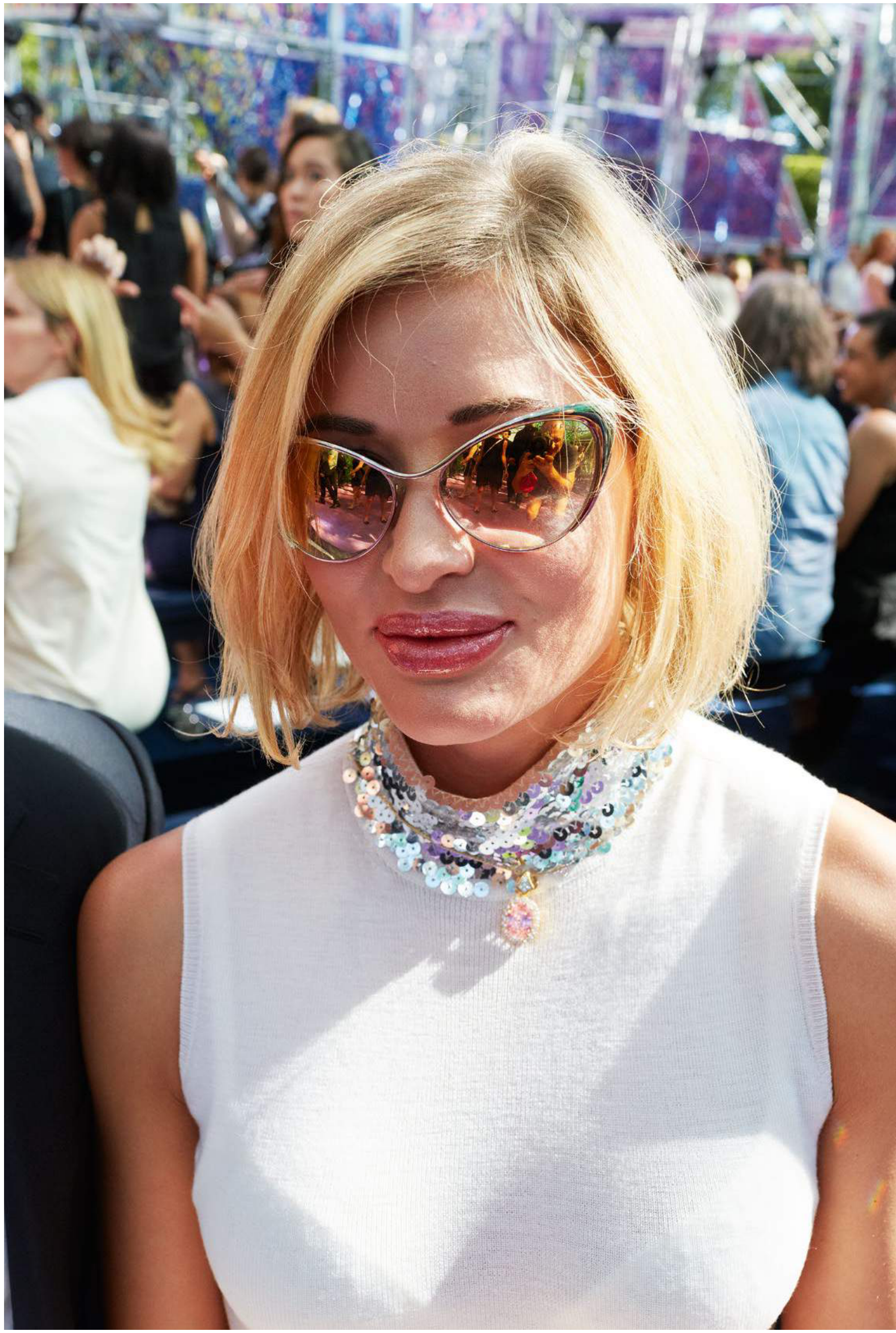
4. *Stone Island: Archivio '982-'012* was published in 2012 to celebrate the brand's 30th anniversary and features 300 classic designs from the archives.

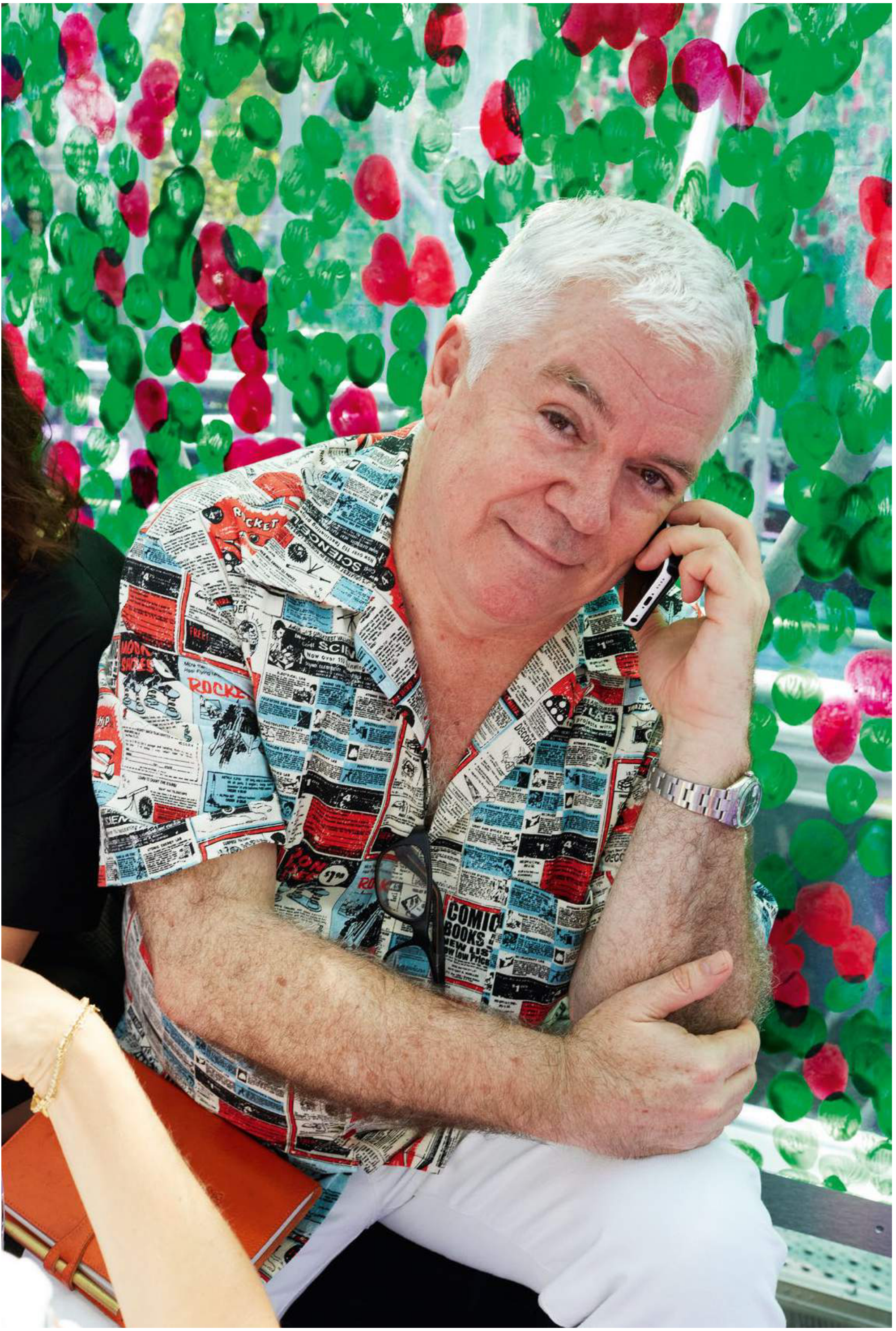
5. Simons and Los Angeles-based artist Sterling Ruby collaborated on the designer's Fall 2014 menswear collection, which featured hand-painted coats and oversized boots. The pair have known each other many years and the show, he said at the time, was the product of their friendship. 'This is our child,' Simons told the press.

6. Ines Kaag is German and lives in Berlin. Desiree Heiss is Austrian and lives in Paris. Together they are Bless. After producing just one piece – a wig made of fur – Martin Margiela asked them to create wigs for his Fall/Winter 1997/1998 collection. It was this commission, they say, that led them to the definitive decision to create their label.

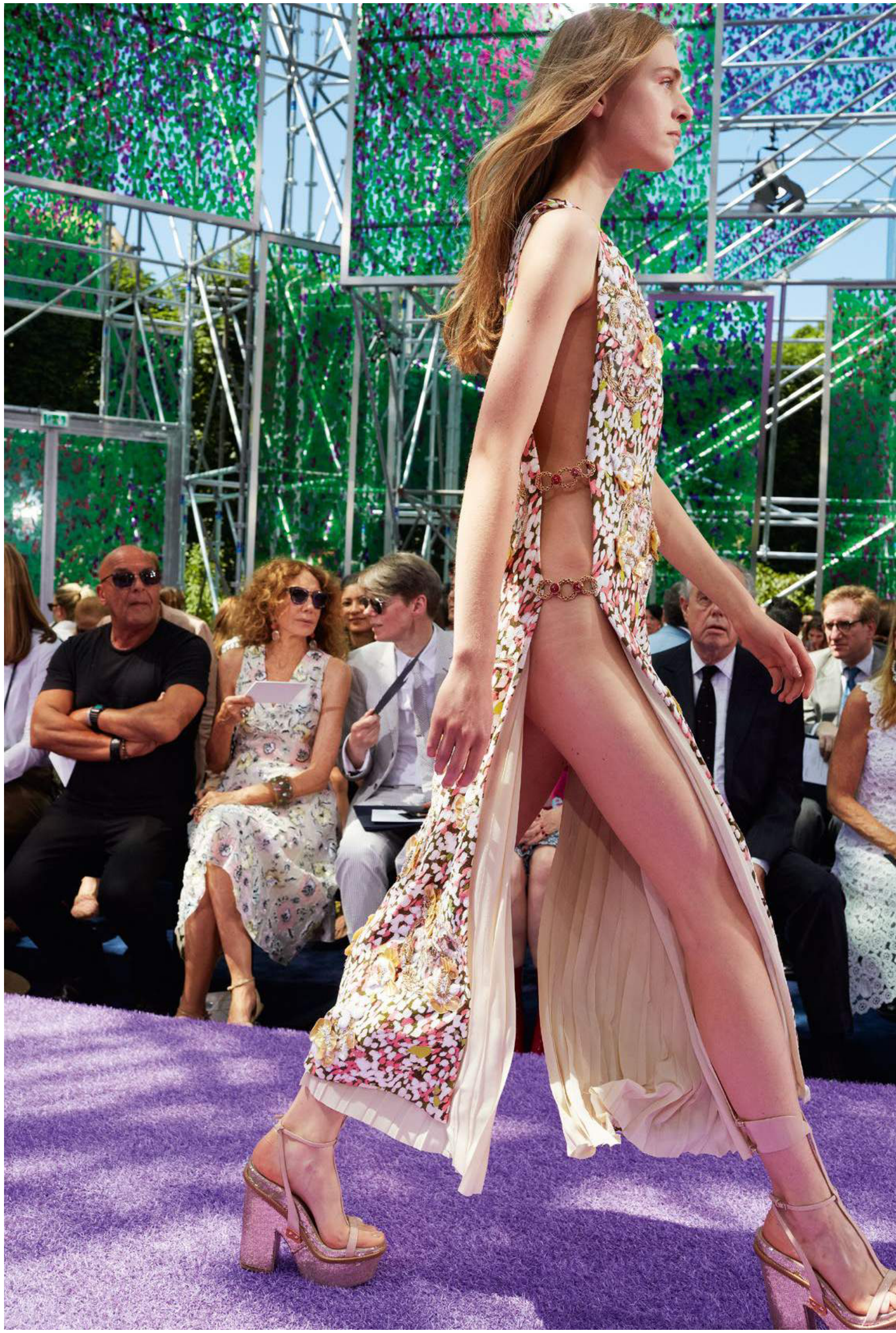
7. Flemish painter Hieronymus Bosch's *The Garden of Earthly Delights* was painted between 1500-1505. The left-hand panel of the triptych shows Paradise and the creation of Adam and Eve, while the right-hand panel depicts hell. The central and largest panel is an unsettling vision of life's pleasures and delights, some allegorical, many of them sinful. The painting has been in the Museo del Prado in Madrid since 1939.

8. Simons' Fall 2005 menswear collection was a celebration of his first 10 years in fashion; its full title was *All Shadows and Deliverance, History of My World*.





Christian Dior



SECURITE

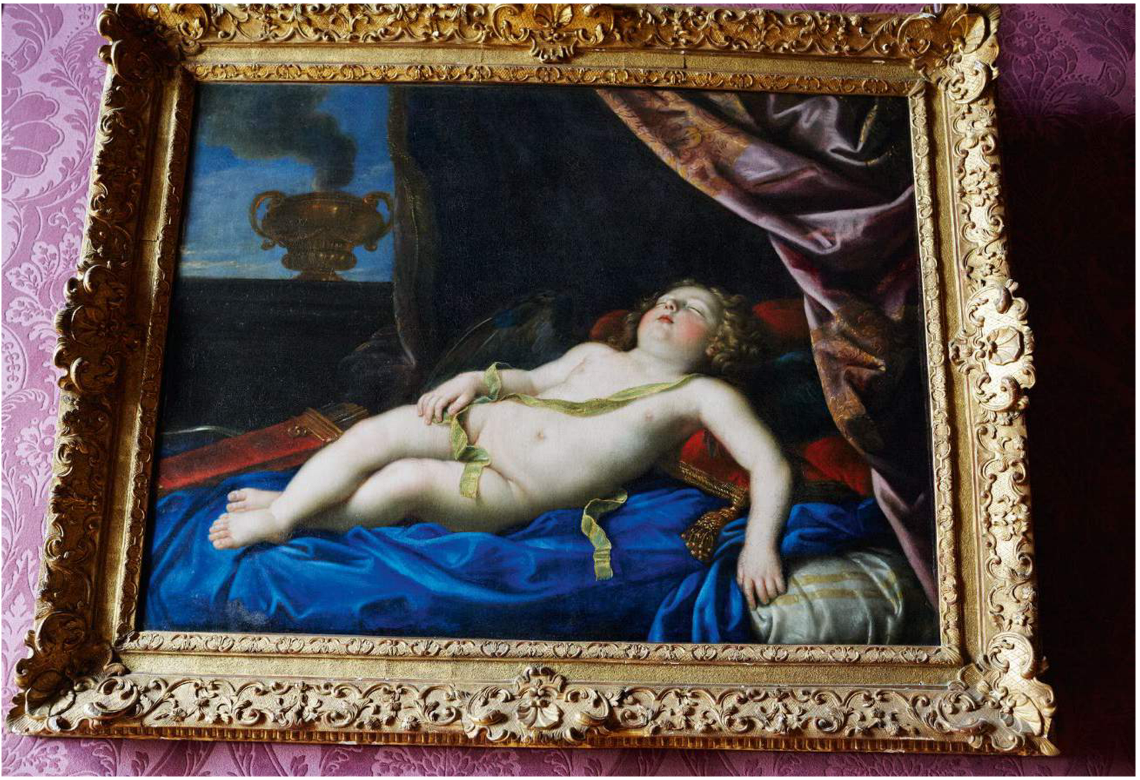
Dior

A TOUTES LES GLOIRES

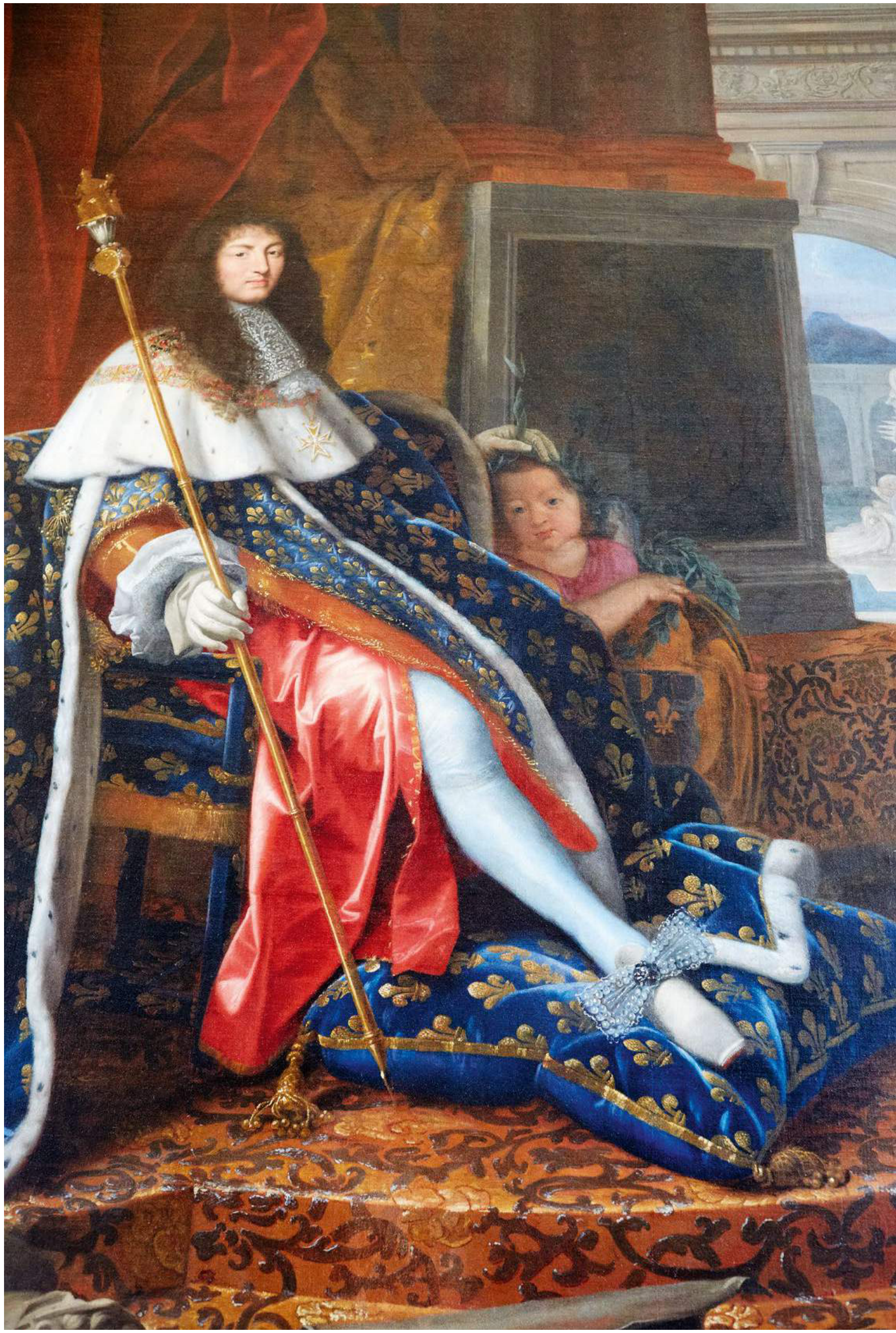
Le Repas chez Simon (1570) de Paolo Veronese
et le plafond de François Lemoyne figurant
L'Apothéose d'Hercule (1733-1736) ont été restaurés
avec le concours de BNP PARIBAS, 1994-2000.

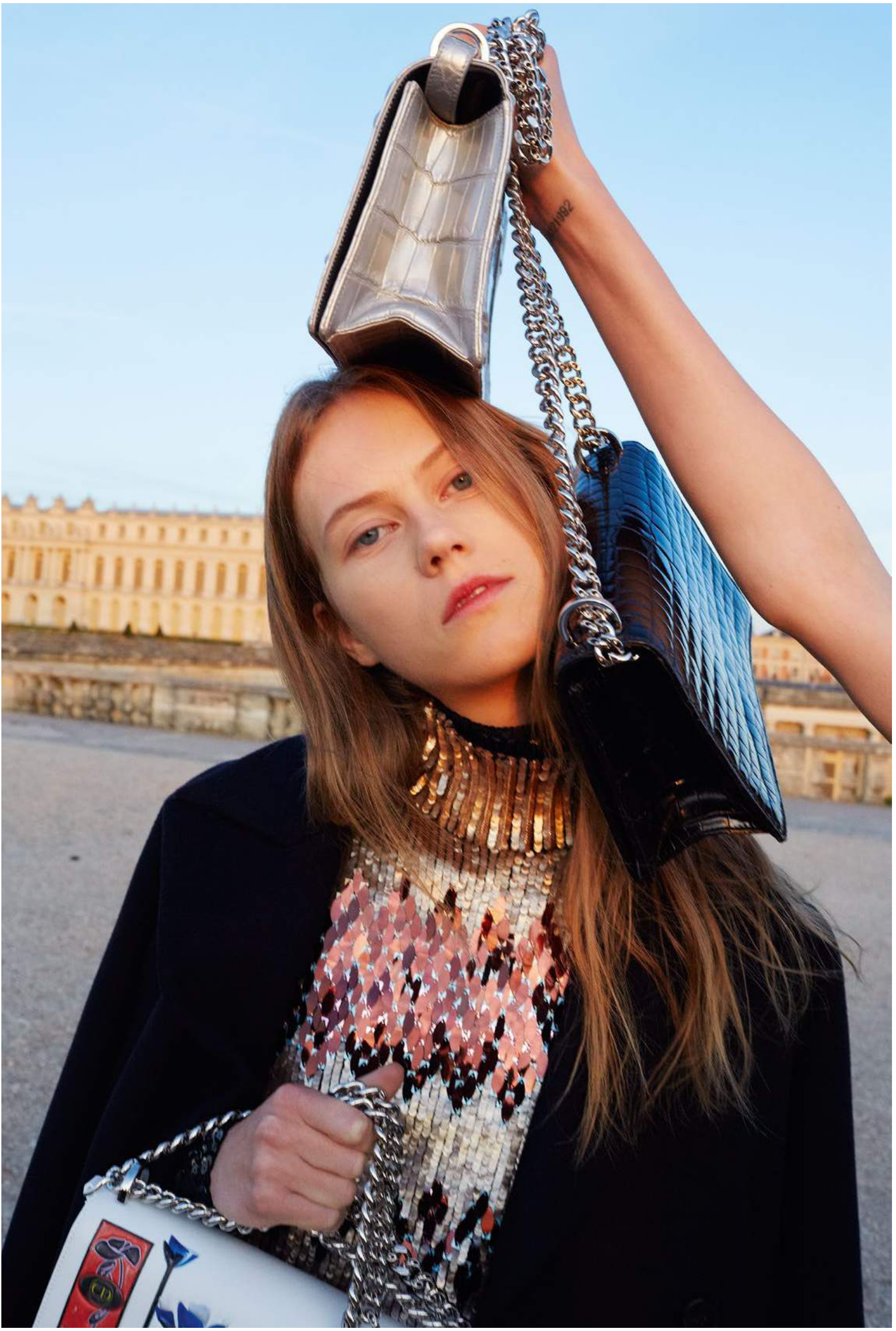
A TOUTES

nt divisés, composés de bassins

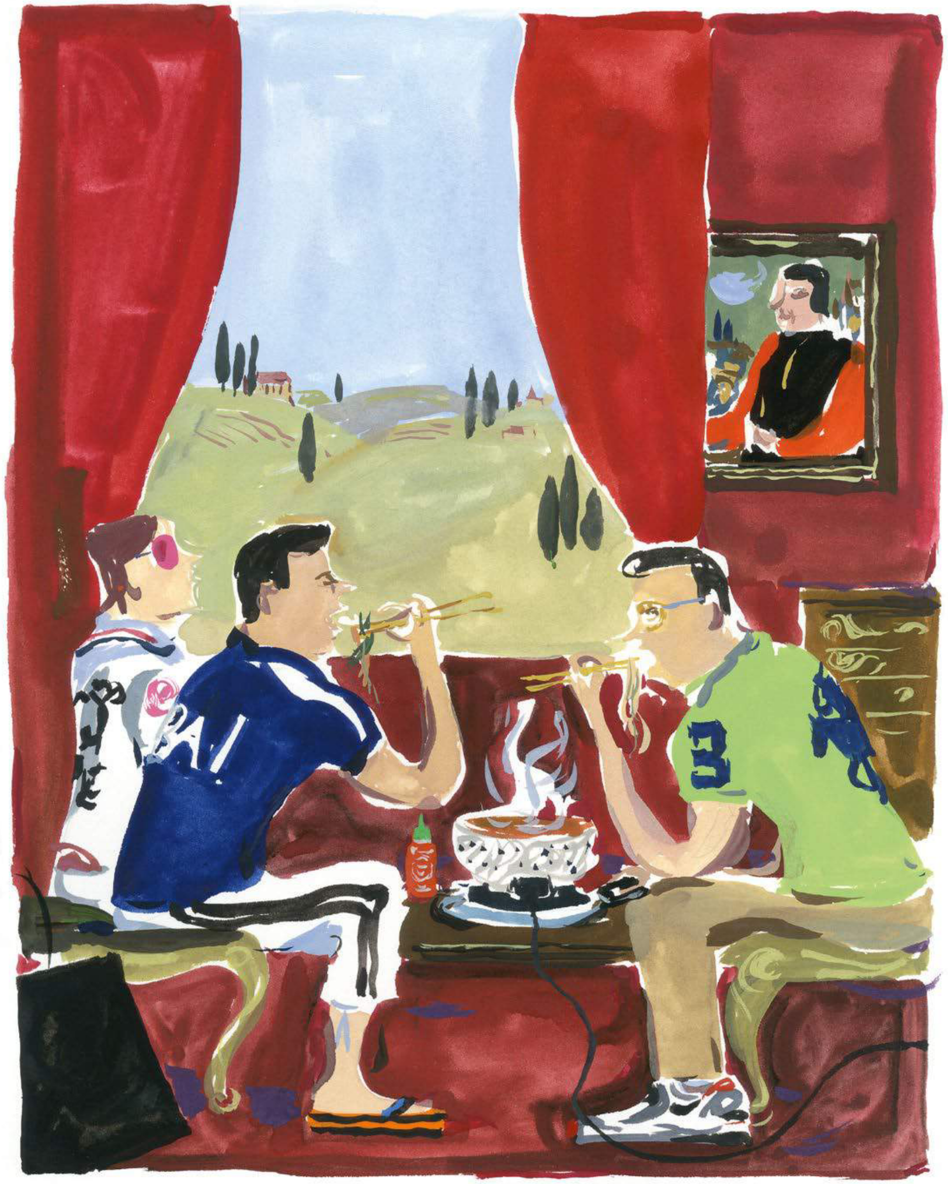


Le Repas chez Simon
L'Apothéose d'Hercule
BNP PARIBAS





Models: Ally Ertel at MP, Annely Bouma at Viva, Greta Varlese at Elite, Julie Hoomans at Supreme, Kinga Rajzak at IMG, Pooja Mor at Premium, Sofia Mechetner at Viva, Tschan at Tomorrow Is Another Day.
Extras: Gisela Teller, Irene Teller, Suzanne Tarasieve. Make-up: Peter Philips, creative and image director of Christian Dior makeup. Hair: Kei Terada c/o Julian Watson.
Casting: Alexandra Sandberg. Photo Assistants: Karin Xiao and Jean Garcin. Stylist Assistants: Rae Boxer, Angelo DeSanto, Marie-Valentine Girbal, Pia Abbar. Seamstress: Marcarine Riaudel.
Make-up Assistants: Grace Ahn, Delphine Delaine, Estelle Jaillet. Hair Assistants: Kevin Rajsavong, Sachi Yamashita. Production by Brachfeld. Post-production: Quickfix Retouch.



Service not included

The taxing art of chaperoning a Chinese billionaire.

By Hung Huang. Illustration by Jean-Philippe Delhomme.

When my concept store, Brand New China, suffered a cash crisis last year, I invited my self-made billionaire, tycoon girlfriend, Zhao Yan, to help me out by investing in the store. She did it in a nanosecond.

This past summer, our two families took a trip to Europe together. It was a learning experience for me, to say the least. I thought I was travelling with friends; silly me, I was really travelling with a tycoon. The journey started with me totally in control. I rented a house near Lake Orta in northern Italy, a region I have long wanted to visit. We dropped our respective daughters at Le Rosey summer camp in Switzerland (her pick, not mine) and drove down to Italy. Most tycoons in China have sleep problems. I think it's the price you pay for being rich in a Communist country. The problem was our villa was next to a church, and an active one at that. Every morning, the priest would ring the bells promptly at 7am and this would go on at 30-minute intervals until 10pm. I thought my tycoon was going to flip, but she actually held out. And by the third day she proclaimed that she somehow slept better near God's noisy bells rather than under the watchful eye of the Communist Party. Point taken.

Chinese tycoons, men or women, love history, so northern Italy was perfect. We spent a whole day touring the Borromean Islands in Lake Maggiore. After we finished our guided tour of Isola Bella, Zhao Yan and her husband sat down for a break. 'Five hundred years,' her husband reflected, 'this is as if someone was rich in the Ming dynasty and never lost their fortune.' In China, there is a saying that wealth can never last more than three generations, so the fact that the Borromeo family could last 500 years is unfathomable. 'Our economy is our politics and vice versa,' the tycoon explained. 'So when new power comes in, they not only get rid of old power, but also old money.' We all sighed. There was really nothing to be said. Sometimes, I thought, we all stay in China against our better judgement.

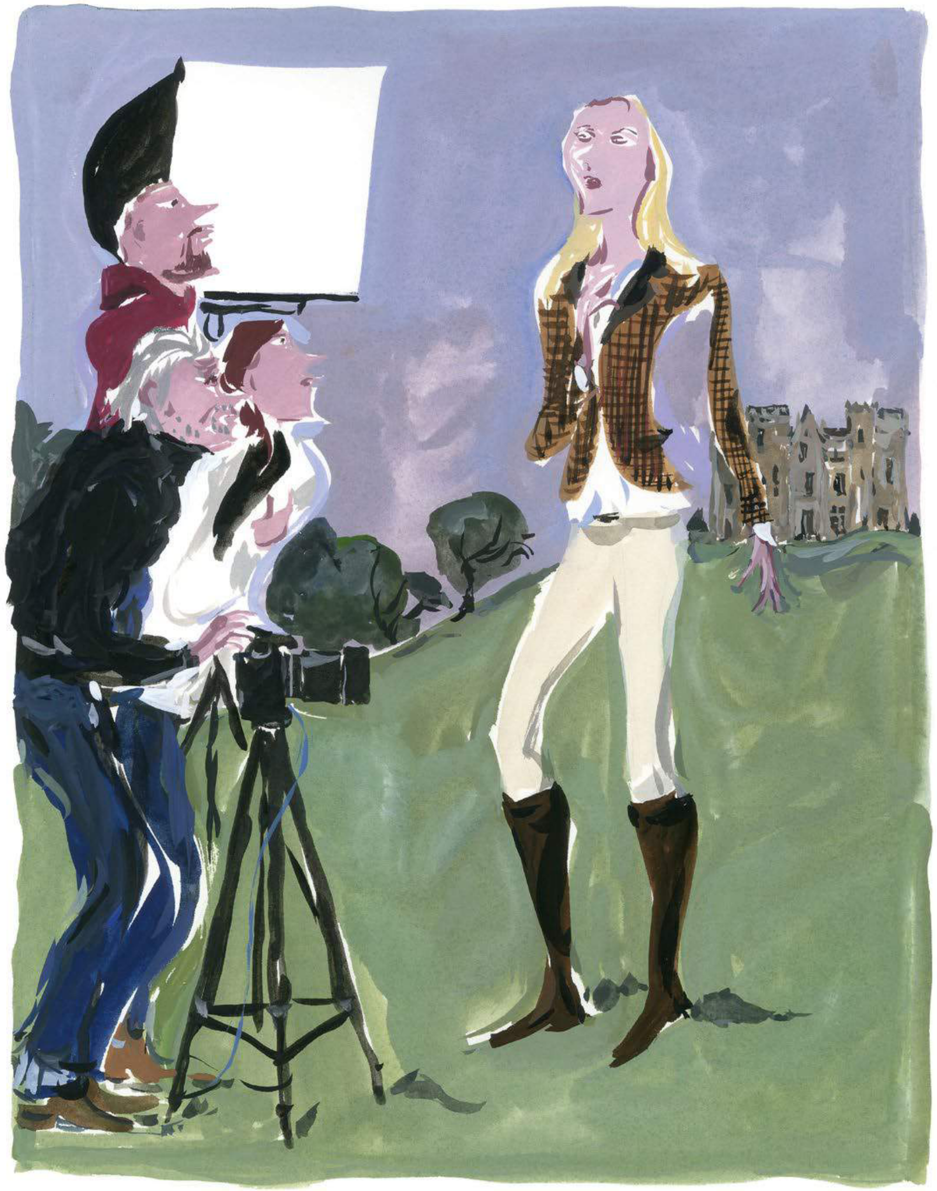
For the last week, I decided to take them to Deauville for further education in bourgeois lifestyles. The first day, we all ate breakfast in the dining room, but for the rest of the week, it was instant noodles in the room. There was no Chinese breakfast at the Hôtel Normandy Barrière, so ramen it was.

Aside from that, I thought food-wise, I could have some fun, but it turned out that, to my great surprise, my friends loved choucroute, the gigantic plateau of seafood, and mussels in cream sauce. They loved it, except they refused to order their own dishes. It was French food eaten the Chinese way. A fork would reach across the long table to stab at some sausage from the choucroute plate in one direction; a spoon would drip cream sauce from the mussel pot in another. And we really showed the bourgeoisie how to put down a huge quantity of food without a trace of good manners. I am pretty sure I am permanently banned from couple of brasseries in the centre of Trouville.

Shopping with the tycoon was both fun and nerve-racking. First of all, she insisted on paying for everything, from fashion to Bellota ham. Between playing assistant, travel guide, babysitter, translator and being bought things, I had a major identity crisis and had to almost scream at her to stop paying. Yet shopping with my friend was also great fun. In hindsight, she does have a great eye for the unusual. She avoids brands such as Louis Vuitton and Gucci (too common, she says), as well as the likes of Hermès and Chanel (too well-known) and goes for the unfamiliar. She does not care about the brand's reputation. It has to be her own discovery. And this could serve as a lesson for luxury brands doing marketing in China. It just might be that while luxury brands are spending millions of marketing dollars to impress the average Chinese consumer, the only Chinese who can afford them are turning away from these brands for precisely the reason that they are too popular.

I ended the summer rather exhausted. After all, my vacation had not really been much of a break. During New York Fashion Week, I saw Diane von Furstenberg and mentioned my summer playing chaperone to my Chinese billionaire girlfriend. 'People just stared at us in the restaurants,' I said. 'It was embarrassing.'

'People will get used to it,' she said, with a little nonchalant wave of hand. And she's right. Everyone will get used to it – and I will, too.



A class act

Why posh girls make frightfully marvellous models.
By Edie Campbell. Illustration by Jean-Philippe Delhomme.

There is a lingering belief that the fashion world is overwhelmingly populated by posh people. Especially in the UK, where the fashion industry is seen as just an extension of an all-girls boarding school, full of lots of girls who know each other already. I can't say that this really fits with my experience, but then this is a business devoted to transformation and dressing up, so a lot of the posh people are probably successfully camouflaged as not-posh, and a lot of the not-posh people are pretending to be posh. But let's entertain the thought for a bit longer.

Whether fashion is – or is not – run by poshos, there has always been a strange fascination with aristo models. From Honor Fraser, Stella Tennant and Jacquetta Wheeler, to Cara and Poppy Delevingne, Suki Waterhouse, Georgia Jagger, Rosie Huntington-Whiteley and Jean Campbell.

If it is true that fashion is inundated by posh models, then why? What makes posh models good models?

Firstly, we're stupidly polite. Hopelessly, helplessly, occasionally dangerously, polite. This has three great benefits when it comes to modelling. Firstly, we always come across as posh and pretty, very eager to please, and with no brain. Models are always underestimated, but the posh models, they won't even be crafty, right? But being underestimated is one of my favourite things: people who expect nothing of you can never be disappointed. But better still, they will usually be pleasantly surprised even if you turn out to be only marginally more capable or intelligent than they had anticipated. So a posh model is already intriguing when she turns out to be anything more than a slightly helpless young schoolgirl.

The second great benefit of this entrenched politeness is that we really hate saying no. This is partly due to a fear of confrontation, and partly due to a fear of disappointing someone. This combination of fears is actually extremely useful when it comes to being a model. Given that models are required to be in total agreement with everyone they work with, as well as relentlessly positive and bouncy, this fear of being in disagreement comes in handy. We are used to repressing our opinions: we have never been totally honest, and are entirely used to skirting round conflict for the sake of an easy and disingenuous life! We really, really, really don't want people to hate us. It means we can happily agree with anyone and say yes to anything without any internal conflict. So, yes, *of course* that dress is the most beautiful thing I have ever seen, and yes, I will shave my head and make out with an armadillo – but only because I just cannot work out how to say no.

The second reason why poshos make good models is that nearly all of us have daddy issues. In fact, also mummy issues, having been abandoned by both parents at birth to a cavalcade of dour nannies with nary a backward glance. This generally means that we want everyone to fall in love with us. In most professions, this is not a useful instinct to have, but as a model, it's ideal: a model's job is to be scintillating. And given that most fashion photographers are men old enough to be our fathers, this makes the daddy issues kick into play twice as fast. But don't jump to conclusions: I've never actually shagged a photographer! I'm far too sexually repressed and English! And I just want to be loved.

The third reason why posh girls make good models is because we tend to be quite hardy. There is no better preparation for a models' apartment than growing up in a very damp and cold castle, sharing a bed with four generations of incontinent spaniels, or being shipped off to boarding school aged four where you will be mercilessly caned for wetting the bed. In comparison to that, a night spent in the middle seat of an overcrowded passenger jet, next to the fetid stench of the loos for 10 hours sounds like a good night's kip.

I really don't know why there is this fascination with the poshness of models. Maybe it's because modelling isn't seen as a real job, so to watch a posh girl doing it – someone, after all, who isn't really a real person, but rather a caricature of the upper class – is a bit like watching a very camp performance. Maybe there's something innately camp about poshness that fits very well with fashion. Who knows? But despite having spent most of my teenage years desperately trying to hide my poshness, convinced that a person could not be simultaneously 'cool' and 'posh', I am now more or less happy to wear my poshness with impunity.

Style conscious

Making fashion's future more responsible.
By Burak Cakmak. Illustration by Jean-Philippe Delhomme.

My (accidental) career in fashion first began back in 2000 and has since taken me from global, publicly traded companies to small fashion start-ups, US to European brands, high-street retailers to luxury houses, every product category – from garments and leather goods to jewellery and accessories – and most importantly to different businesses that all had different values embedded in their production methods. And every step of the way I became ever-more convinced that fashion as an industry has to be fearless in investigating the consequences of designing and producing clothing, and determined to improve our ethical and environmental standards. Because we all know they need improvement.

Since August I have been studying the fashion world from a different angle. As the newly appointed dean of Parsons Fashion School in New York I now have a real opportunity to influence how fashion moves forward in the future. It's exciting to have the chance to use my past observations, learning and passion with the younger generation; I can't wait to help create positive change by instilling new values and beliefs in the industry. Fashion is also a business with innovation built into its DNA, not to mention the passion of some of the world's most creative people, so it has always seemed strange to me that, while fashion has evolved in parallel with society and culture, it has been oddly slow in leading from the front. There is huge room for improvement in how fashion manufactures and sells its products, so it begins to play a transformational role in terms of reducing its impact.

This makes the future of fashion retailing exciting *and* challenging. For both emerging and larger brands, the number of prospective consumers is growing around the world, but problems such as resource scarcity, political instability in global supply chains, and unexpected fluctuations in the retail environment, are proving that creative thinking really is required. While ideas big and small are emerging, these foundations need further work to ensure long-term sustainability for both companies and consumers. Concepts such as the 'circular economy' and closed-loop production (as being introduced by Kering and H&M for synthetic-fibre production), as well as smaller-scale visions of promoting local production, selling small quantities, upcycling, or using new production technologies such as 3D printing, are all helpful, but only a start. Because as brands are realizing, sustainability and the ethics of fashion are becoming increasingly important for the people who keep them in business: consumers. They are gravitating towards brands that fit their values and which 'talk their language'. This means that brands have to foster a long-term and real dialogue with their customers, a retail process that passes firstly through building emotional connections and trust. This development looks sets to become ever-more important as the further diversification of the type and size of brands, products, production methods and retail channels continues to remodel the fashion ecosystem. And it is a development that will affect the huge multinational brands as much as start-ups.

Our role as educators is not just to help our students understand this world and to teach them how the creative industries work. But it is also about giving them the tools that allow them to disrupt and revitalize the status quo with exciting innovation. We want our students to begin changing the system even before they join it. And what I have already seen shows that we can have hope. The current generation of students in design schools the world over are approaching their education with open minds and a passion for finding their own distinct path to change. They don't confine themselves to one aspect of the fashion world, but rather explore as much of it as possible, from sustainable systems, design strategies, constructed environments, data visualization to social justice. This multidisciplinary approach is allowing them to become both adaptable and resilient to the often harsh realities of the global, connected business environment, while giving them the freedom to bring creative solutions to the issues they genuinely care about – and we should, too.

Today I see these fledgling designers express the same curiosity about life that I have felt as far back as I can remember, and it is this desire to question, continuously learn and understand the world that makes me optimistic about the future. Many challenges lie ahead, many barriers to overcome, but I genuinely believe that together we can help fashion do what creativity has always done best: show us new ways to improve our world.

Parallel turns

Thom Browne & Remo Ruffini on their enduring Moncler collaboration.

Courtesy of Moncler

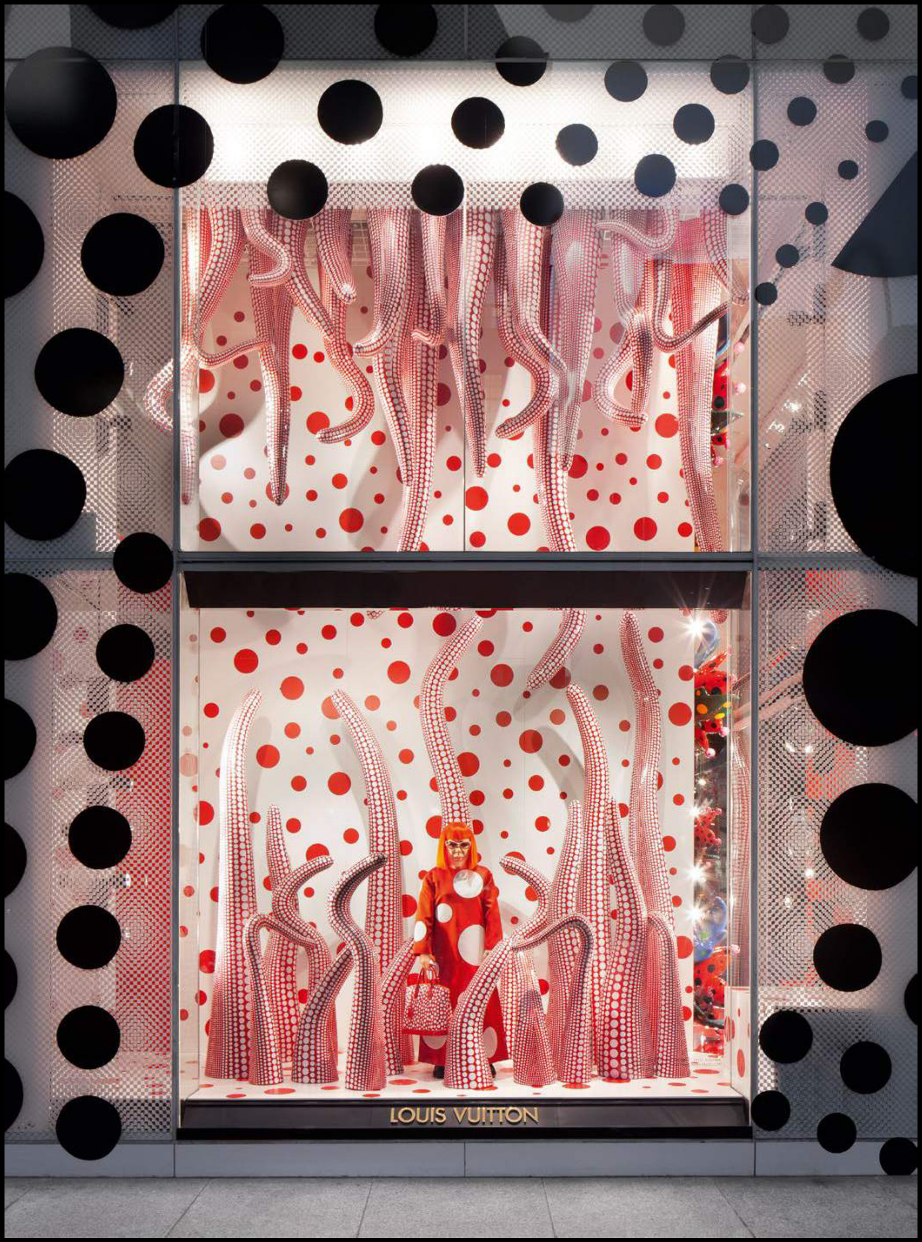
Thom on Remo
Everything that Remo [president and creative director at Moncler] represents is always just the best of everything. There is so much to respect: his intelligence, his refined taste and commitment to quality. They allow him to take commercial ideas and not to make them boring or hollow. I think he is very rare in the way that he conducts himself both in business and dealing with people – it's not just about the products but individuals.

Remo on Thom
After attending my first Thom Browne show, I knew I had to work with him! To combine his bespoke tailoring and world of references with our sportswear was a very strong proposition for the market. I'm always struck by the concepts behind the presentations we've done together, by his ability to transform niche intellectual ideas into marketable experiences and products that are very easy to sell. I always say we must be as unique as we can, and Thom is a big part of that uniqueness.

‘If people look up from their smartphones, you know it’s a good window.’

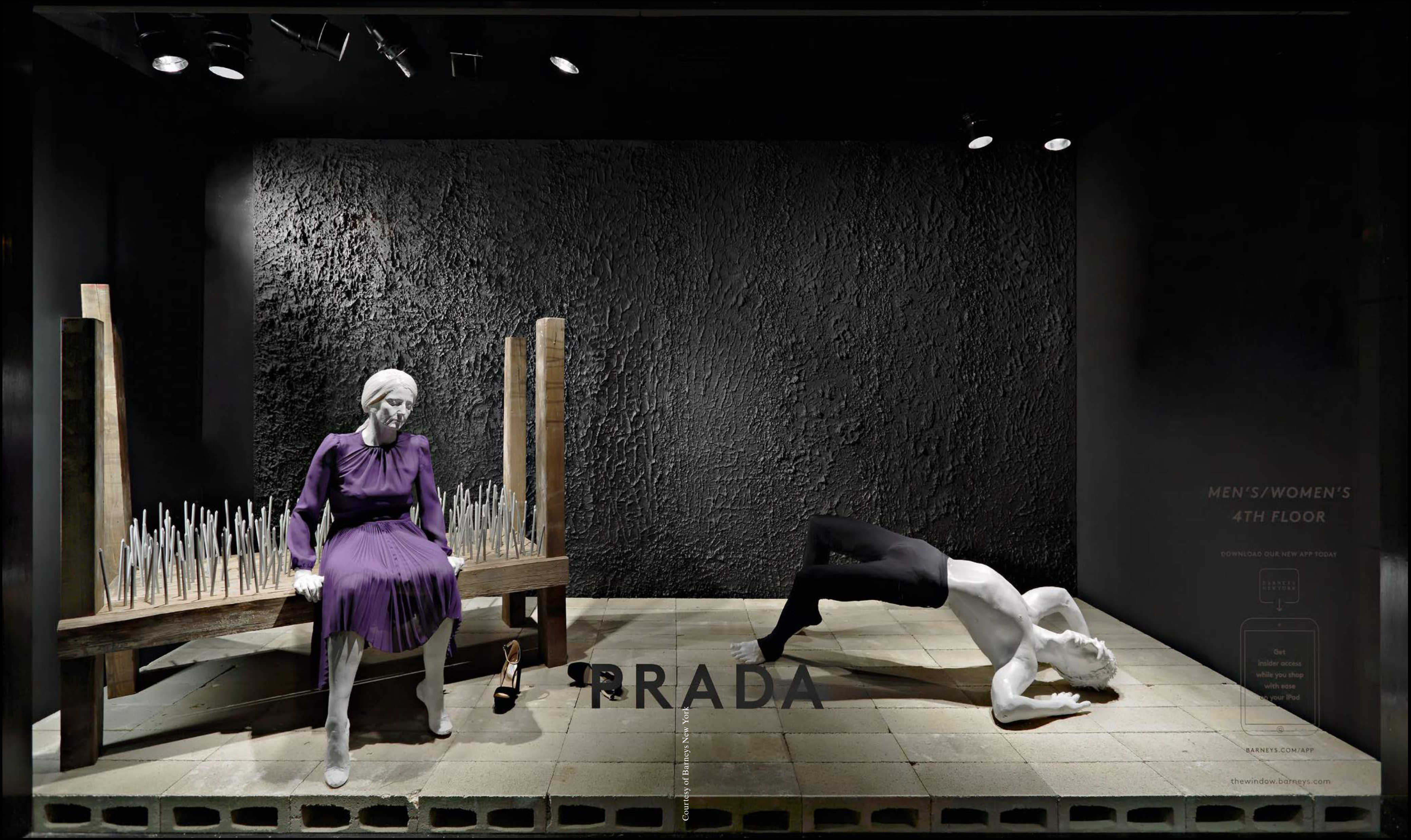
Louis Vuitton’s Faye McLeod and Barneys’ Dennis Freedman can make you stop in your tracks.

By Jonathan Wingfield



Artist: Yayoi Kusama © Louis Vuitton Malletier/Photo: Stéphane Muratet

Yayoi Kusama
Louis Vuitton Fifth Avenue, New York, July 2012


PRADA
MEN'S/WOMEN'S
4TH FLOOR
DOWNLOAD OUR NEW APP TODAY
Get insider access while you shop with ease on your iPad
BARNEYS.COM/APP
thewindow.barneys.com

Courtesy of Barneys New York

Collaboration with Prada
Barneys New York, Madison Avenue, New York, Spring/Summer 2014

‘The creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adds his contribution to the creative act.’ So said Marcel Duchamp, addressing the 1957 Convention of the American Federation of Arts in Houston, Texas. Few creative acts are subjected to quite so much public interpretation and scrutiny as shop windows; and few shop windows generate quite the reactions as those belonging to Barneys’ New York flagship on Madison Avenue, and Louis Vuitton’s network of 467 stores situated across the globe.

Inspired by art installations and opera sets, production design and 3D imagery, kinetic movement and mechanical engineering, the windows created by both Barneys and Vuitton demonstrate how, when the boldest creative ideas and the latest technologies are refracted through the prism of a luxury brand, they go way beyond simply channelling the zeitgeist and begin to actually set its agenda.

Following his 20-year tenure as founding creative director of *W*, Dennis Freedman took his reputation for collaborating with artists and photographers to the next level when he joined Barneys as creative director in 2011. Since then, he has carved out a strong identity for Barneys as a department store with personality and values. Drawing upon an eclectic mix of cultural references, techniques and observations, every six weeks Freedman transforms its windows into an unpredictable series of sometimes dark, sometimes subversive, and always eye-catching moments. In 2014, a live breakdancing elf performed among psychedelic mushrooms in *Baz Dazzled*, a collaboration with film director Baz Luhrmann, whereas earlier in the year a series of powerful Bruce Weber films representing the struggles and triumphs of transgender individuals were screened across Barneys’ windows in support of the LGBT community.

With previous experience at Topshop and Selfridges, Glaswegian Faye McLeod has a long and varied history of windows that came together when she was appointed visual image director of Louis Vuitton in 2009 (and of LVMH in 2012). Working between studios in New York and Paris, her reputation at Vuitton has been forged through an unparalleled expertise in translating the spirit of the brand’s collections – previously those of Marc Jacobs, and now those of Nicolas Ghesquière – via her own highly imaginative and whimsical aesthetic universe. Whether it’s ostrich eggs or a waxwork model of Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama, her consistency in the quality of execution is always exquisite. No small feat considering the mind-boggling number of stores her creations are rolled out to.

Faye, along with her right-hand Ansel Thompson, invited Dennis and *System* over to Louis Vuitton’s Visual Image Studio in midtown Manhattan to discuss the power of polka dots, collaborating with artists, and how life would be tough without Google.

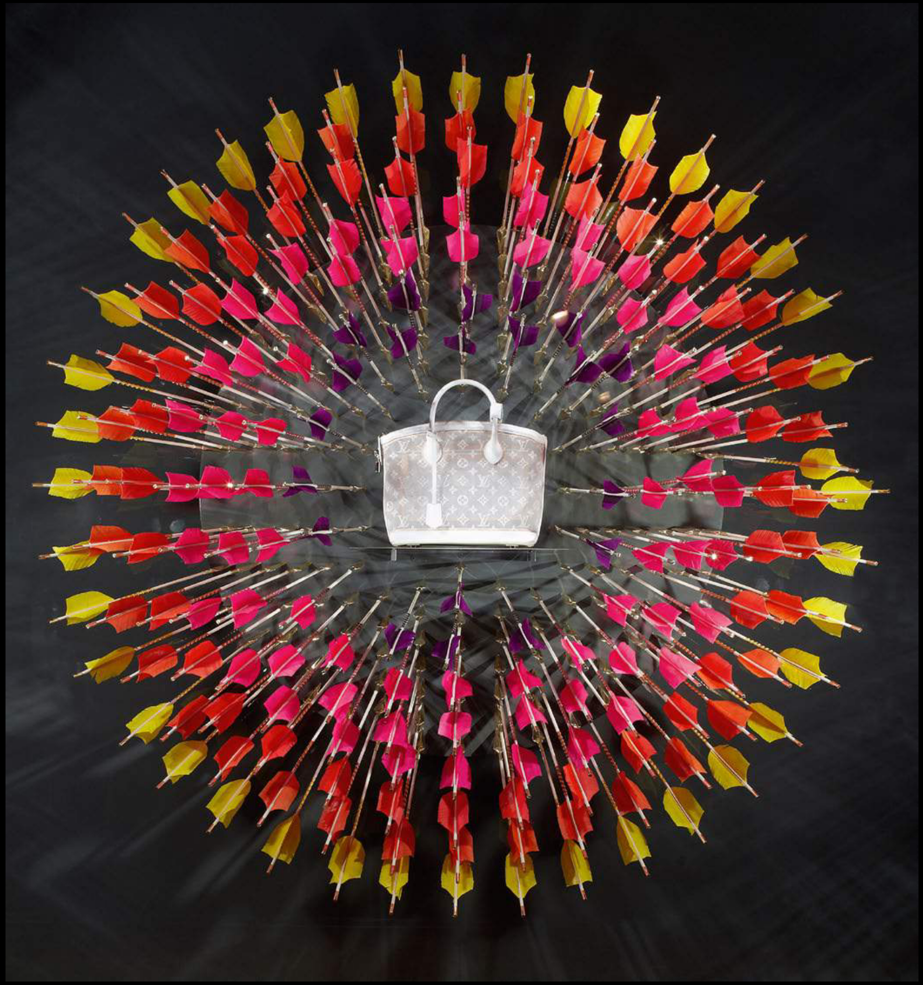
‘At Vuitton, the window concepts are used in our 467 stores. It’s impossible to expect everyone to interpret them the same way – but that’s a good thing.’

Window displays have the potential to affect different people in different ways. Yet the work is utterly dependent on the spectator’s perception. So let’s start by discussing this idea of your windows being open to infinite interpretation.

Faye McLeod: At Vuitton, the windows we create are incorporated across 467 stores, so you obviously keep the perception of the customer front of mind. But because both our customers, and any potential viewers, are so widespread and diverse, it’s impossible to expect everyone to react the same way – but that’s a good thing, too.

Dennis Freedman: For me, any successful artistic endeavour has to have ambiguity; it shouldn’t be an easy read. My starting point is that the viewer’s perception of the Barneys windows will reflect their own personal experiences and visual acuity, and it’s that range of interpretation that I find exciting. If you think about William Eggleston’s photograph of a peony in his book *The Democratic Forest*[1], you can imagine that a lot of people will look at it and see a beautiful flower. But then in her introduction to the book, the great Southern writer Eudora Welty[2] refers to that same photograph as ‘a bloom so full-open and spacious that we could all but enter it, sit down inside and be served tea’. The challenge is to create something that allows for multiple levels of interpretation.

Faye, the sheer scale of how Louis Vuitton’s windows are rolled out is extraordinary. Does that scope for potential interpretation inform the creative process, or do you consciously try not to become too influenced by it?



© Louis Vuitton Malletier/Photo: Stephane Muratet

Arrows
Louis Vuitton Avenue Montaigne, Paris, April 2012

Faye: Because of the number of stores we're creating windows for, repetition is key. Repetition of concept, of production, of quality, of impact, of interpretation. Aside from the obvious amplification of the idea, at Vuitton we are really exposed to how much beauty resides in repetition.

Barneys' windows present an interpretation of what designers and brands create. Dennis, do you feel a responsibility to those brands, to respect their DNA or is your commitment only to highlighting Barneys' point of view?

Dennis: It's both. When we started collaborating with designers I felt strongly that the windows should be neither a reflection of what the designer nor we at Barneys would normally do on our own. You always hope that the combination of the two creative approaches produces something unexpected and original. One of our first collaborations was with Christian Louboutin. Christian has a theatrical and humorous side, but I was more interested in exploring the danger and sexuality within his work. In one window we created a disc, eight feet in diameter, from which hung a large silicone cast of a woman's torso. The woman was bent over and flame-red hair was cascading to the ground. She was surrounded by black, red-soled Louboutins, all circling her head at different speeds. Now some people might have looked at that window and thought, 'What a strange tableau'. Others might have seen references to Cocteau and other Surrealists. But I hope that some viewers saw something darker and more mysterious in this woman's sexually provocative pose. Again, it's all in the spectator's mind.

Tell me about any specific window displays or broader visual elements from your childhood that you now recognize as somehow informing your work today.

Faye: I find that you always end up back at the beginning – usually subconsciously. My mum will see the windows I've done and often recognize things from my childhood. She'll say, 'You know, you used to love collecting ostrich eggs, and when we lived in South Africa, you always loved the safari'.

Dennis: I went to Penn State University, which is better known for engineering, agricultural studies and its football team than for art. I focused on what was going on in New York at the time, and started doing large-scale installation pieces. At one point I decided to cover the entire campus with polka dots: I bought these huge sheets of foam and dyed them all orange with clothing dye, cut them up into thousands of pieces, and then one night went out and covered the whole campus with these pieces of orange foam. I wanted to create polka-dot grass. I didn't know [Yayoi] Kusama's work at the time. Your collaboration with her a few years was so impactful. I guess I'll always be a sucker for polka dots.

Faye: That's funny. I'd love to see that.

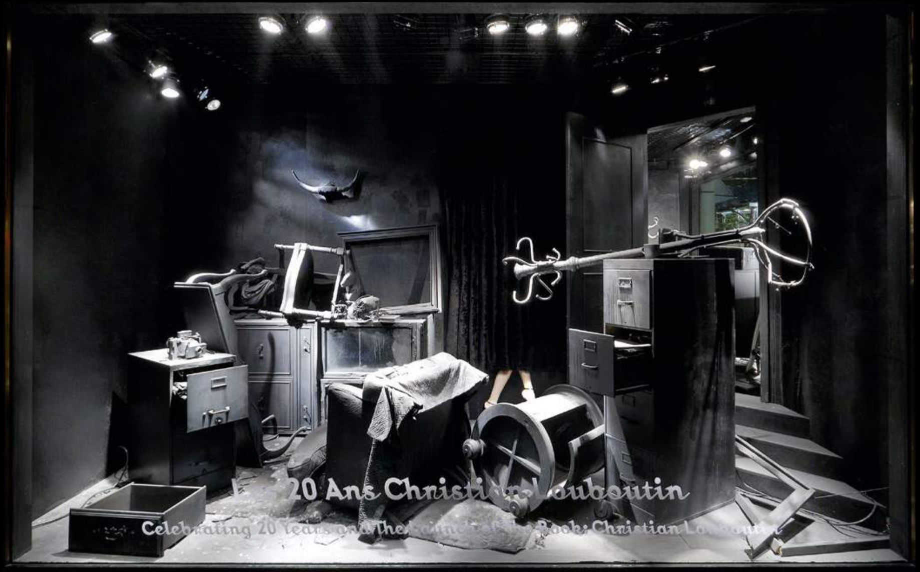
Dennis: Another time I wrapped up my entire art-history classroom – the chairs, the walls, the slide projector, everything – in brown kraft paper. I wanted to make it impossible for the professor to teach class that day. It was a period of time when I could just let my imagination run free, and the irony is that all these years later I'm returning to that sort of work.

Windows appear to be the combination of many disparate visual elements – art installation, opera and theatre sets, film-production design, still imagery, 3D experiences… Are you constantly bathing in all these references?

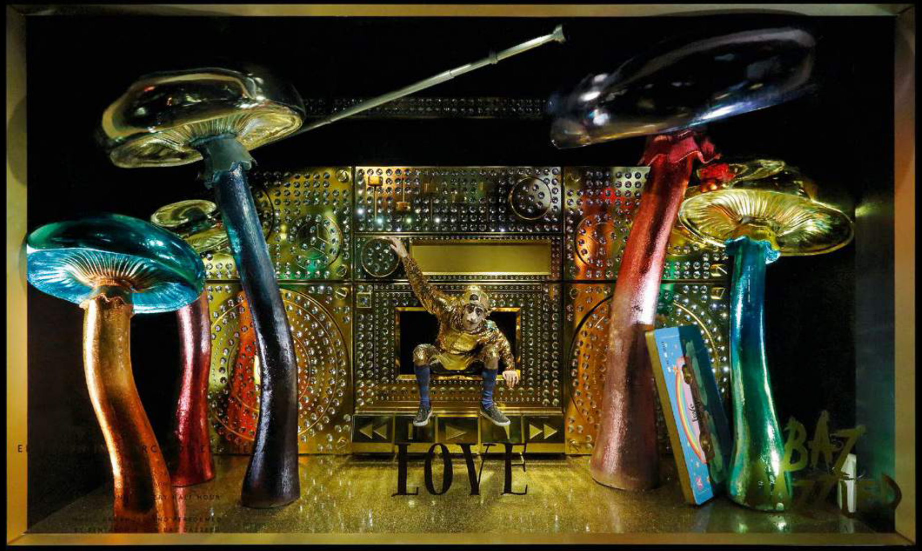
Faye: Our eyes and ears are always switched on. It's not so much a case of channelling one specific thing, it's more about being aware of what's going on, just seeing every type of performance and theatre set, and cinema obviously. We recently went to see Kanye live in L.A.; he was keen to show us his stage set. It was fascinating to see how Kanye combines the backdrop of the creative set with the concert performance; how he choreographs the lighting and everything. It was kind of like experiencing a giant window in the middle of a stadium in L.A.

Dennis: I find that it's just as inspiring to spend time in the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles as it is in the Museum of Modern Art. What's interesting are the two radically different experiences: one seemingly mundane, the other high-minded. I always try to avoid the middle. For example, I'm drawn to minimalism – like a Richard Tuttle *Wire Piece* or a John McCracken polished-resin plank[3]. However, at the same time the work of Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt fascinates me. He creates these extraordinary, deliriously baroque religious altar pieces made out of tinfoil, candy wrappers,

> **'I'd never designed windows before coming to Barneys. For me they were simply large contained spaces that held infinite possibilities.'**

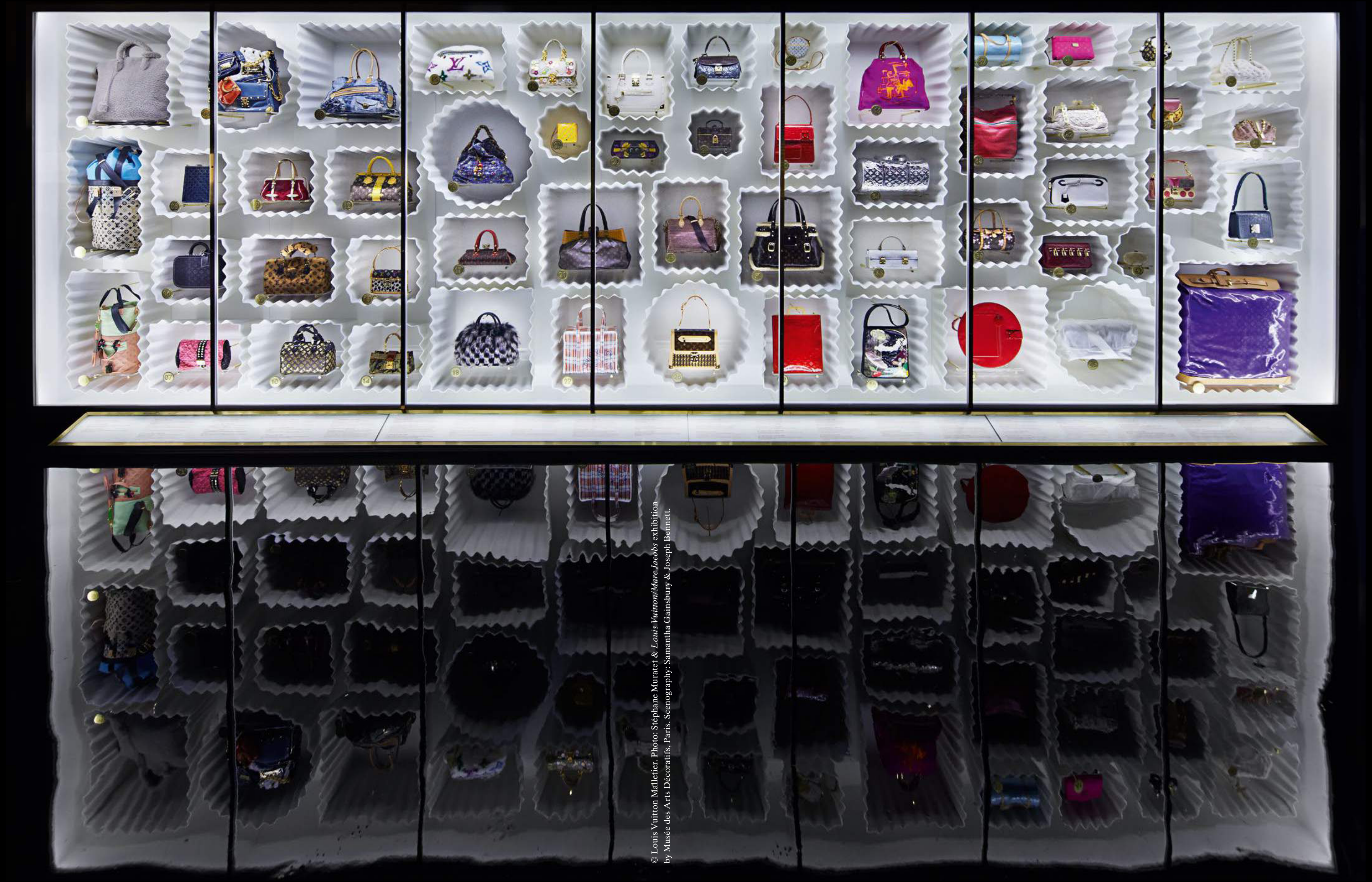


Collaboration with Christian Louboutin
Barneys New York, Madison Avenue, New York, Fall 2011



Collaboration with Baz Luhrmann
Barneys New York, Madison Avenue, New York, Holiday 2014

Courtesy of Barneys New York



© Louis Vuitton Malletier. Photo: Stéphane Muratet & *Louis Vuitton/Marc Jacobs* exhibition
by Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris. Scenography: Samantha Gainsbury & Joseph Bennett.

Louis Vuitton / Marc Jacobs exhibition,
Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, April 2012

beer cans and glitter. The two extremes feed into the work we do at Barneys.

I've noticed you both refer to your work as 'windows', and never 'window displays'. Is that a conscious decision?

Faye: I banished the term 'window display' from our studio! I don't consider what we're doing to be displays; I prefer the term 'window concept'.

Ansel Thompson: That old-school world of mannequins and window displays just seems really dated. That's why I've always admired what Dennis is doing, because his windows ask different questions about what a window display should do.

Dennis: When I came to Barneys, I had never designed windows before. So for me they were simply large contained spaces that held infinite possibilities. Our goal was to bring the windows to life. One reference point is the work of Arte Povera artist Pier Paolo Calzolari[1], whose sculptures often incorporate refrigeration units that generate a delicate coating of frost on their surfaces. He talks about 'activating the space'. At Barneys, we're trying to 'activate' our windows by using sound, kinetic movement, live performance and other things. In one instance we built a 10-foot-long aquarium and filled it with rockfish that swam around suspended resin Louboutin shoes. Of course, we chose fish whose colour matched the shoes.

The word display seems almost too passive.

Dennis: Totally passive. Yet I realize that if I were working on the same extraordinary scale as Faye, it would make this kind of experimental work almost impossible. It's very time intensive, very risky, and it can easily fail. But I *like* that it can fail.

Faye: I agree. I think making mistakes – or at least having the freedom to potentially make mistakes and learn from them – is vital to the whole process.

Give me an example of a mistake that's occurred.

Faye: We've been burned a couple of times where we've come up with an idea that, in the context of the studio in Paris, seems amazing. But these ideas can have other meanings in other contexts…

Such as?

Faye: We did a window with paper clothes, which didn't go down so well in Asia…

Ansel: …because it's a funeral tradition there!

Dennis: One time we were using these custom-designed black lights that were switching on and off, but what we didn't realize was that they were building up intense ozone within the windows, which subsequently set off the store's fire alarms. We had to come up with a venting system really quickly, but that's all part of the thrill of doing this work.

Faye, one of the key distinctions between your work and that of Dennis at Barneys is your continual collaboration with the Louis Vuitton creative directors. Can you tell us about that dialogue?

Faye: We are really very mindful of translating the creative director's vision into the windows; we take all the direction we can, because it's impossible to get it right straight away. We'd been working with Marc for a long time, but now with Nicolas and Kim Jones, it's a different process.

In the case of Marc Jacobs, your collaboration extended beyond the windows to creating those fantastic show sets, like the train and the carrousel. Is that happening with Nicolas Ghesquière?

Faye: Yes, we work on the sets with Nicolas and his team.

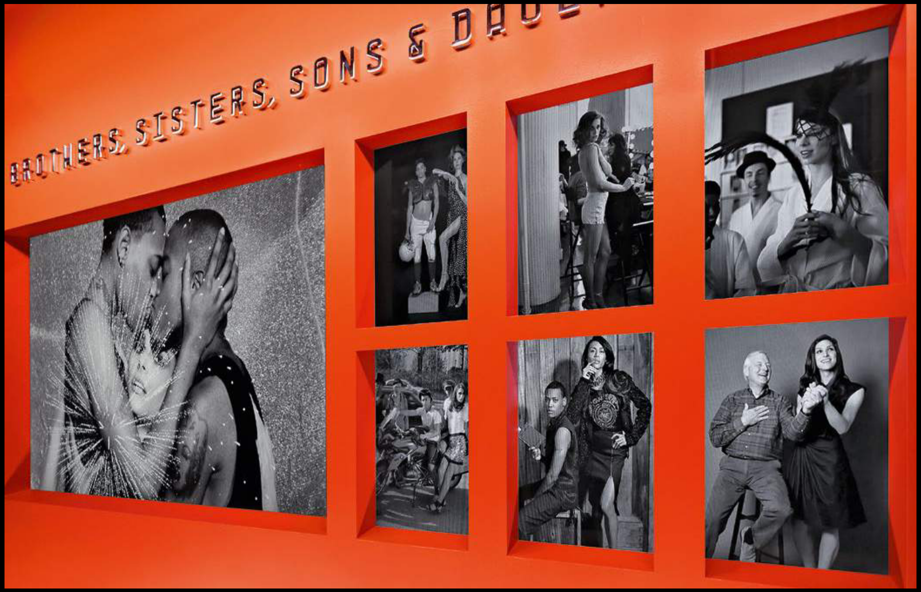
Ansel: Marc was very much about the seasonal moments, whereas Nicolas is more about the continual development of a process; it's a language, there are chords, and it develops over a longer period of time.

Faye: The fact we're building this new language and this new Vuitton universe is really beautiful; we are constantly learning, and turning to innovation for the answers. As everyone knows, Nicolas is a real innovator…

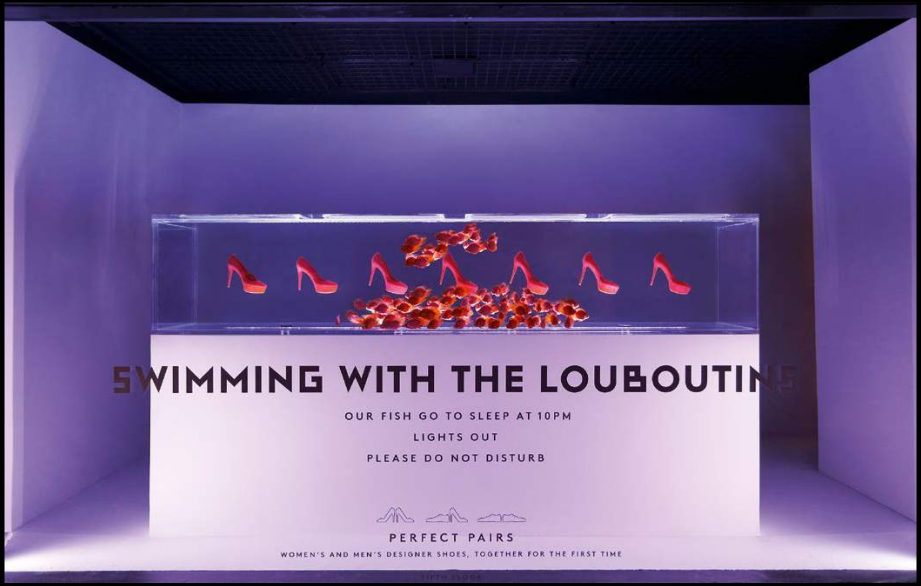
Ansel: …and he's genuinely interested in technology.

Faye: For us, we are constantly trying to update, to push things forward, to innovate. It is interesting at the moment, all these tech companies are looking for fashion people and all these fashion companies are looking for tech people. And if only people grasped that if you want fashion and tech, you need to have fashion and tech *together*. You can't get one without the other, that's why you need to build a team that combines different types of background and experience.

> **'If I were working on the same scale as Faye, it would make this kind of experimental work impossible. It's time intensive, very risky, and can easily fail.'**



Brothers, Sisters, Sons & Daughters transgender campaign, photographed by Bruce Weber
Barneys New York, Madison Avenue, New York, Spring 2014


SWIMMING WITH THE LOUBOUTI
OUR FISH GO TO SLEEP AT 10PM
LIGHTS OUT
PLEASE DO NOT DISTURB
PERFECT PAIRS
WOMEN'S AND MEN'S DESIGNER SHOES, TOGETHER FOR THE FIRST TIME

Shoe windows (fish tank)
Barneys New York, Madison Avenue, New York, Fall 2012

Courtesy of Barneys New York

Tell me about your respective teams. It seems that balancing creative, engineering, and technical skills is key to producing successful windows.

Ansel: We're 14 here in New York, and 12 in Paris.

Faye: But I still consider us to be a small entity, and I like it like that. I think that independence is really important; Michael Burke and Delphine Arnault[5] have really supported us having the space in which to create and come to projects with different perspectives. When you're so deeply entrenched in a brand, it can sometimes be challenging to see things with an objective eye, but for us, breaking those rules comes quite easily.

Dennis: At Barneys, we only have six people on our team, but without all of them I couldn't do my job. I have never worked with such talented people. They are passionate, obsessive and thankfully don't seem to need much sleep. When I was building the team I looked for people who could both solve problems *and* make things work. We build most of our windows in our studio in Long Island City. This might surprise you, but the first person I brought on as a consultant was an inventor and scientist from the MIT Media Lab[6]. When I went to meet with him, I discovered that the building he worked in was filled with biochemists, scientists and doctors. In one corner I noticed an engineer adjusting a cage he'd made. Inside was a plastic baby doll. It turned out that he was developing a device to help babies fall asleep. For him of course, this was all a means to an end. Something pragmatic. To me, the sight of a plastic baby doll rocking in a wire cage was something visually provocative.

> **'When I was building the team, the first person I brought on as a consultant was an inventor and scientist from the MIT Media Lab.'**

Faye: It's about approaching the same problems in different ways.

Dennis: Exactly. I know that whole right-brain-left-brain idea seems pretty outdated now, but these scientists and engineers seem to me to be primarily technically minded.

Ansel: That's a bit like me. I don't come from a visual background; I come from a product-design background, which I guess is more technical.

Faye: You are *way* more engineer than me! My brain works very much with visual memory – I can remember every Barneys window, every Bergdorf window. I can get very commercial and product-based, really in line with the vision we want to follow business wise; Ansel will push against my ideas and I will push back, then we end up getting to an end result that we'll develop in whatever way, building models, rendering, sketching, plasticine…

So written into that process is the tension between creative feats, technical feats, engineering feats and then the feats of scale and production…

Faye: …and then the commerciality that wraps around that, which is the core purpose.

What is the common trait across all your team members?

Dennis: Curiosity and obsessiveness.

Faye: [Laughs] …is that why you like me so much?

Dennis: Yes! I'm pretty OCD, too.

Give me an example where your OCD behaviour has been put to good use in your work.

Dennis: We once did this apocalyptic window and everything was covered in a layer of black pigmented dust. A mechanical cockroach was supposed to be jumping slightly from a sofa, but we just couldn't get it to jump in a convincing way. It got to about two in the morning and most people were fading, but I realized then that the few who were still trying to make this work, the ones determined to get that damned cockroach to jump, were the ones I wanted on my team. You know, most spectators were not even going to see this cockroach – it was tiny and almost hidden in the corner of the window – but to me it was a key element. And if only one person noticed, it was worth it.

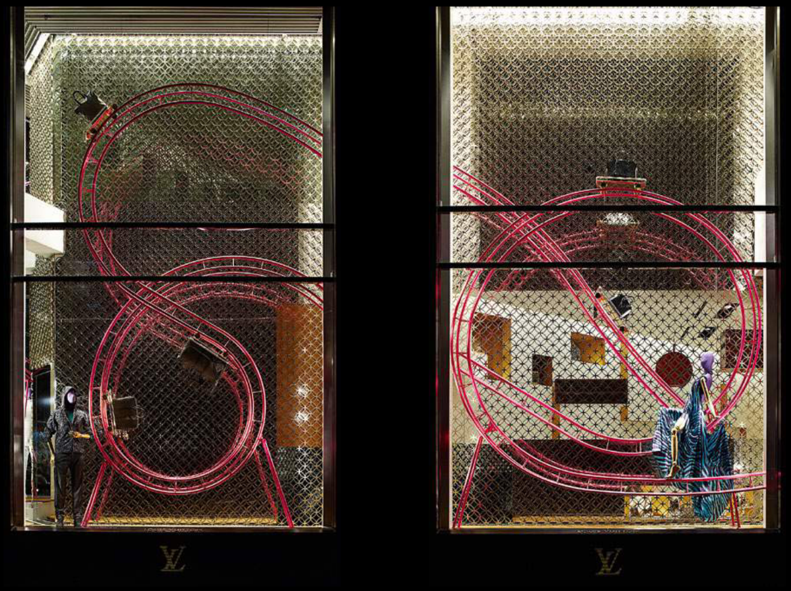
Faye: It's that attention to detail we all love about you!

Dennis: So which of you two came to Vuitton first?

Faye: I came first. Ansel took some persuading! We totally respected the existing structure and were able to build a really diverse team. But what's important to us is to feel free; we're quite rebellious within a French organization. It's something that Mr. Arnault really understands; he's the one who has been with the CEOs, really helping us to get to a place where we can push ideas and think differently.

Ansel: There has to be some kind of mischievousness there.

Can you give me an example of something that you thought was perhaps too radical to be accepted in the context of Vuitton, but that actually ended



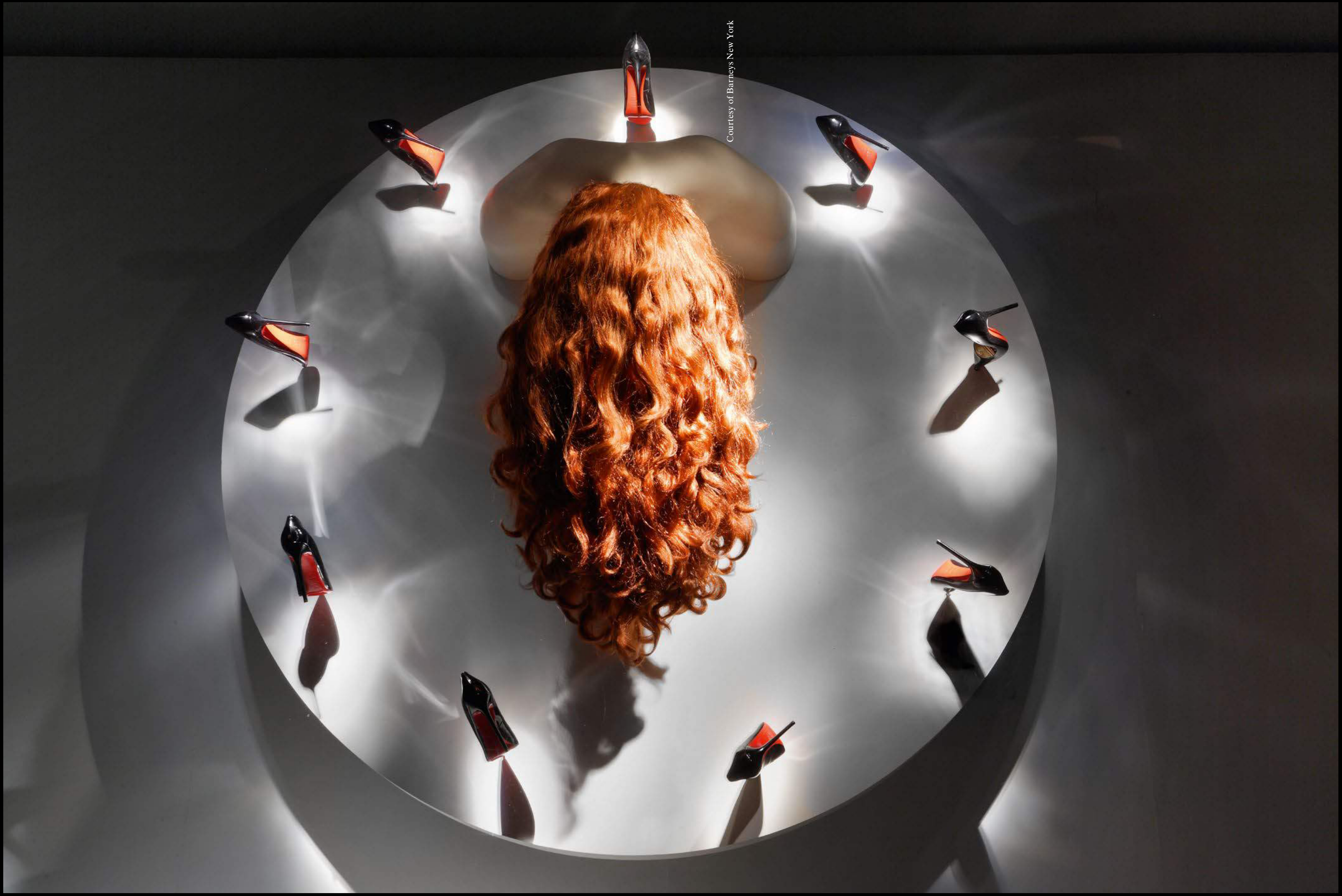
© Louis Vuitton Malletier/Photo: Stephane Muratet

Roller Coaster
Louis Vuitton Champs-Elysées, Paris, April 2011

LOUIS VUITTON

Artist: Frank Gehry © Louis Vuitton Malletier/Photo: Julien Boudet

Frank Gehry
Louis Vuitton Fifth Ave, New York, August 2014



Courtesy of Barneys New York

Collaboration with Christian Louboutin
Barneys New York, Madison Avenue, New York, Fall 2011

up being championed by the company?
Faye and Ansel: [In unison] Kusama!
Faye: I basically had to find an art collaboration for a window. I felt that it had to be with a woman because before I joined I felt Vuitton's windows were often quite masculine. I also wanted it to be a Japanese artist because we go there a lot and we find it so visually stimulating. Whenever we get stuck for ideas – and we get stuck quite a lot – we jump on a plane and go to Tokyu Hands[7] for a rummage around! [Laughs] Anyway, I really wanted to work with Yayoi Kusama. We love her work and it felt right.
Ansel: She can make people feel quite uncomfortable and we liked that.
Faye: So we flew over to Tokyo again because we were told that she'd only ever agree to doing anything if she meets you and connects. We were both a bit terrified, but it turned out to be one of the most inspiring days of my life. We kind of disappeared off the planet for a day to be in her world: we sat and watched her paint, and she took us through all of her canvases. When we got up to leave her people just said, 'She will work with you'. Everything else followed from there, but the windows came first.

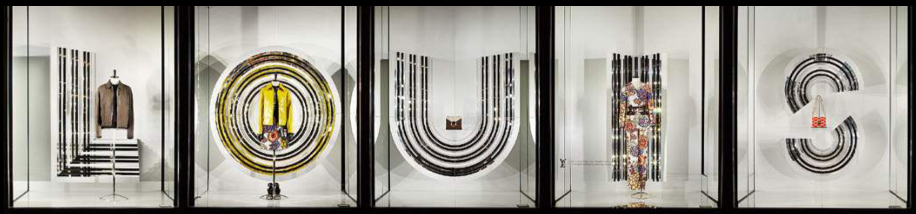
And that's an exception?
Faye: The product usually comes before the windows. But then we said to ourselves that we didn't want to put *any* products in the windows. We worked really closely with Kusama and her teams: we've got this fantastic Japanese guy in Brooklyn who does a lot of sculpting and he agreed to do the Kusama waxwork doll.
Ansel: She was really open and intelligent and wasn't precious. As Faye says, it was all about the connection.
Faye: Yes, there have been a few magical moments when you really connect with the people you are collaborating with. Like when Ansel said to me, 'We keep doing these art collaborations, but what about architecture?' We had the chance to meet Frank Gehry because of the Fondation Louis Vuitton, so we went off to L.A., just to see if we could connect.

Was Frank Gehry's Fondation building completed by that stage?
Faye: It was about a year before. I just said to him, 'We're here to talk about windows', and he came back with this really old windows book and said it was his father's. I still have goose bumps thinking about it today. The amazing thing was watching my team – some of them are these really talented young guys straight out of Saint Martins – working with Frank Gehry's team, learning their software, and developing their skill sets. It was just magical to be so welcomed into his world, with open arms.

Generally speaking, how far ahead are you working for a project like this?
Faye: We have a design team, a technical team, a production team, and a logistics team all working together in order to get the physical components shipped to destinations all over the world by boat. And because of all of that, we have to work a year in advance. That's the general timeline for what we call our 'network' stores. With the *maison* stores – in places like the Champs-Elysées, Bond Street, Fifth Avenue and so on – we can be a little more reactive.
Dennis: At Barneys we create a new window every six weeks, but we work on our big November-December holiday windows throughout the year. They tend to be technically and creatively ambitious, so by February or March we are well into it.

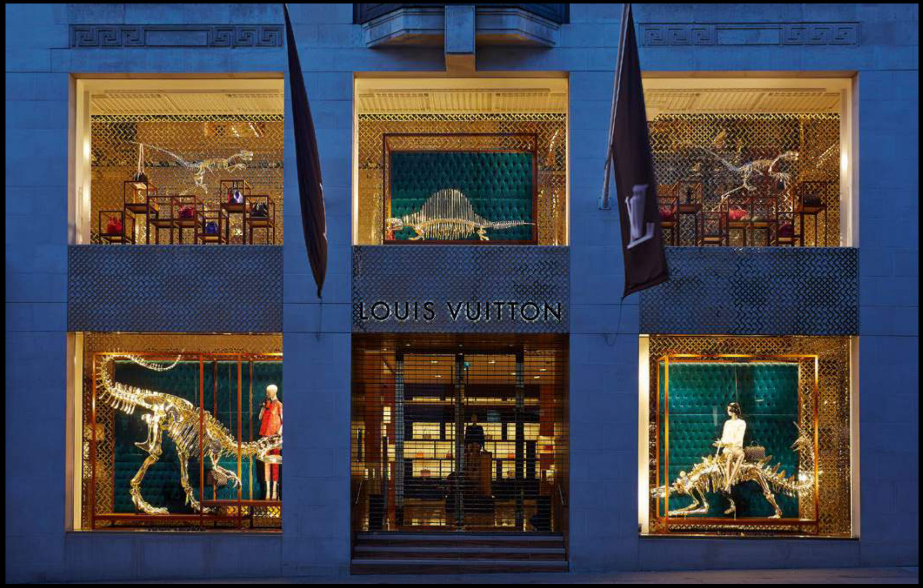
The digital world now allows the physical world to be captured, shared and disseminated. Does that inform the way you now approach your windows? Are you conscious of building 'Instagram-friendly' elements? Is the 'windows selfie' a key to success?
Faye: You can stand outside a Louis Vuitton window and see the number of people pulling iPhones out to take selfies in front of them. The effect is immediate: we can unveil a window in Paris on early Monday and by Monday afternoon I can sit in my New York studio and look at pictures of it all over social media. That's enabled us to get a better understanding of how far we can push a window scheme; of how we can best balance our view of the brand with that of the audience, and what they are willing to engage with.
Dennis: At Barneys, our strategy is always to amplify one idea across all social-media and digital platforms. The windows are a key component of expanding our branding opportunities. The fact that we incorporate kinetic and performance elements allows us to capitalize on the hunger for video content. Ten years ago, the windows

> **'The effect is immediate: we can unveil a window in Paris on early Monday and by the afternoon I can sit and look at pictures of it all over social media.'**



© Louis Vuitton Malletier/Photo: Stephane Muratet

Letters
Louis Vuitton Avenue Montaigne, Paris, April 2015



© Louis Vuitton Malletier/Photo: Melvyn Vincent

Natural History
Louis Vuitton New Bond Street, London, May 2013

‘With the Kusama windows, you had people with their noses pressed against the glass. We were cleaning handprints off the windows all day.’

depended on physical traffic; now, we have a devoted digital audience, with over 4 million social-media followers we can reach via the films we make.

Faye: The windows are central to everything.

Dennis: That’s right. And the social-media and traditional-press impressions are intended to lead you back to the Barneys website. Right now we have about 3 million unique visitors every month to our site. We have a luxury editorial site, *The Window*, where we share original content that in turn gives us a presence on another platform. In 2013, we launched the *Brothers, Sisters, Sons & Daughters* campaign shot by Bruce Weber. It featured 17 transgender men and women, but we not only shared the images and videos shot by Bruce in the Madison Avenue windows, but also on our website in a really impactful way. Those campaign images were shared heavily on both our own social channels, but also by others who were inspired by the campaign.

Faye: The windows you’ve done using film are among the best I’ve seen in Barneys. The transgender windows made me just stop dead in my tracks. I remember getting goose bumps looking at it and texting you immediately to say what an effect it had had on me. What I admire most is that you can be topical, you can push buttons, you can be a little on the danger level.

Dennis: The *Brothers, Sisters, Sons & Daughters* campaign was particularly close to my heart: it was thought out very carefully and we knew from the start that the images and films we made of these extraordinary kids were going to become the basis of our windows. We wanted people to view the films through the windows.

Faye: We are starting a more digital approach with the Louis Vuitton *maison* stores and we’d really like to push into new boundaries.

Aside from social-media coverage, how do you personally gauge the success of a window?

Faye: When we put Kusama in the windows, you had people with their noses pressed against the glass. You know you’ve done a good window when the guys have to clean the nose and handprints off the windows several times a day!

Can this physical experience extend into a broader cultural experience, one in which windows can live on after they’re dismantled?

Faye: Ultimately, we’re challenging ourselves with giving people something that might get them off their smartphones while they’re walking down the street. I always say the windows are the billboards to a brand. You’re on prime real estate, you should be having fun with it, you shouldn’t be taking yourself too seriously.

Dennis: If I think of the Vuitton windows – and I think about this a lot – those windows will always be implanted in my mind. You’ve defined your brand, you’ve put Vuitton out there, and you’ve raised the level. It’s one thing to show the product – you might buy a dress, you might buy 10 dresses and five handbags – but how does that compare to the overall effect that those windows are having for the brand? And in particular those windows that didn’t even have products in them! I’d say 90 percent of the time we do put product in Barneys’ windows, but we have to be aware that these are huge branding opportunities. Product is not enough; we need to keep reinforcing what makes brands like Barneys and Vuitton so special.

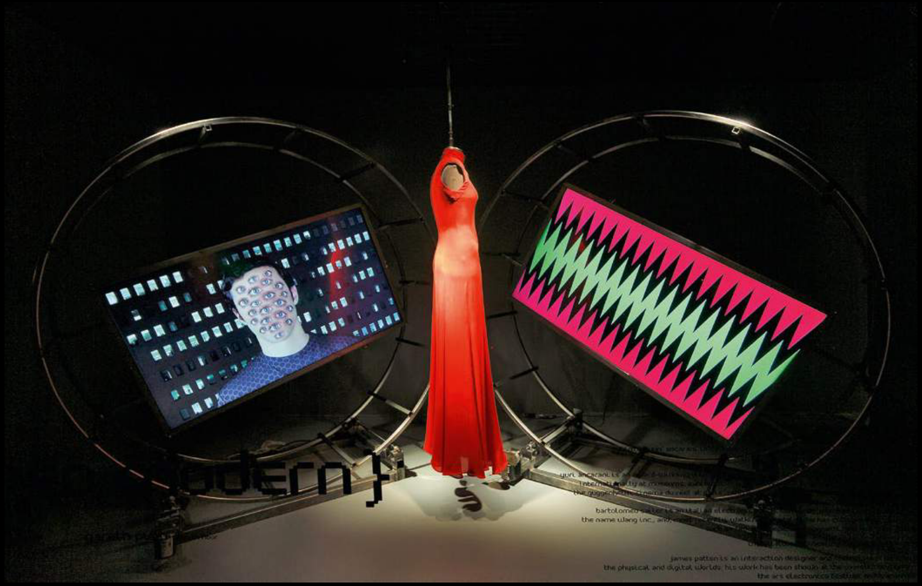
Ansel: Going back to display: it’s not just display, it’s also a cultural experience.

Dennis: Exactly! With the *Brothers, Sisters, Sons & Daughters* windows, there was no product per se, except that the kids were wearing brands we carry. The important thing that you came away with is that Barneys really stands for something, and I feel that’s an extremely important message to convey. We have our core customers and we believe that they will respond positively to our view of the world.

Dennis, what comes to mind when you think of Vuitton windows?

Dennis: I think that everything these guys do for Vuitton is an expression of extraordinary creativity and attention to detail. That alone says everything I need to know about the quality of the brand’s products. I just look at the details in the windows and it blows my mind to think they’re being replicated all over the world. I will never forget that gold-plated dinosaur – it is embedded in my brain!

Faye: That dinosaur was intense! My friend and I had been to the Natural History Museum and watched as all the kids were completely in awe of the dinosaurs. It got me thinking about how we

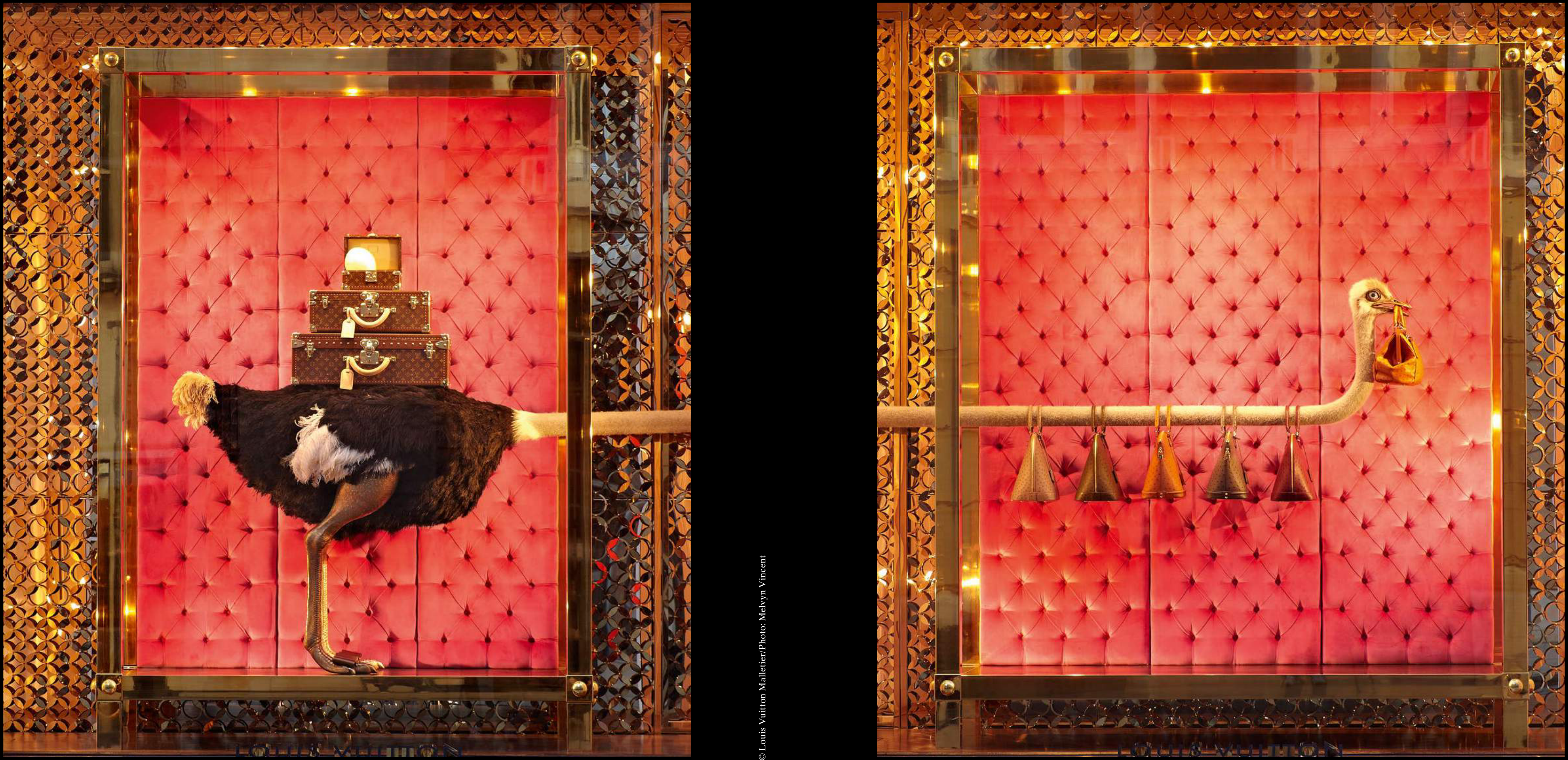


Neo Modern window, collaboration with Yuri Ancarani
Barneys New York, Madison Avenue, New York, Spring 2013

Dries Van Noten
Emergence by Andrew Zuckerman

Collaboration with Dries Van Noten
Barneys New York, Madison Avenue, New York, Spring 2014

Courtesy of Barneys New York



© Louis Vuitton Malletier/Photo: Melvyn Vincent

Ostrich
Louis Vuitton New Bond Street, London, August 2010

could do a dinosaur that would leave the same impression on adults as well.

Ansel: We found a factory in China that makes dinosaurs for theme parks.

Faye: One of the important things to know about our working process is that we don't use the same suppliers all the time; it's about finding the right supplier with the right savoir-faire for the task in hand, no matter what country they're based in.

When we did our Arrows window we wanted to get the feathers dyed in the very best pigmentation, and that meant India. The teams research in order to get the very best end result, whether that's for the creative or the production or pigmentation.

Dennis: But that's the real excitement of when you're imagining something: we're both lucky enough to work with teams who are committed to producing the very best result. When we did a window with Chloé, we featured a surrealist dress designed by Karl Lagerfeld that had an image of a showerhead embroidered on the front. I wanted to show the dress encircled by a continuous stream of water. My team tracked down a water filament in a shopping mall in South Korea and then found a factory in Texas to construct the shower.

Faye: [Sighing] What would we do without Google?

Dennis: What *would* we do without Google?

Faye: Apple and Google, without those two we would be in tricky waters!

Dennis: Tell me about it!

1. William Eggleston's *The Democratic Forest* was published in October 1989 and featured 150 photographs taken throughout the 1980s.

2. Eudora Welty (1909-2001) was a novelist, short-story writer and photographer whose work centred on her native Mississippi. Her 1973 novel, *The Optimist's Daughter*, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize.

3. John McCracken (1934-2011) created his first plank sculpture – pieces of lacquered plywood that lean against the gallery wall – in 1966.

4. The term Arte Povera was first used by critic Germano Celant in 1967 to describe the anti-establishment work being created by a like-minded group of Italian artists that included Pier Paolo Calzolari and Michelangelo Pistoletto.

5. Michael Burke is chairman and CEO of Louis Vuitton; Delphine Arnault is Director Executive Vice-President at Louis Vuitton.

6. According to its website, the MIT Media Lab in Cambridge, Massachusetts, encourages 'the most unconventional mixing and matching of seemingly disparate research areas' and creates 'disruptive technologies'.

7. Tokyo department store Tokyu Hands stocks a unique mix of products that includes DIY equipment, stationery and travel gear. It also has a cat café.

**Louis Vuitton Windows*, a book featuring 35 of Faye McLeod's most iconic window concepts, is published by Assouline.

LOUIS VUITTON

Ange Leccia
Louis Vuitton, Beijing China World, Beijing, February 2015

© Louis Vuitton Malletier/Photo: Simon Gao

‘Your boarding pass acts as a permission to shop.’

Travel retail is now so vast it’s known as the ‘Sixth Continent of luxury’.

By Marion Hume

CHANEL
CHANEL
LOUIS VUITTON
PRADA
BURBERRY
BOTTEGA VENETA

© Aéroports de Paris/Photos: Jérôme Galland, Mikaël Lafontan & Olivier Seignette. © Louis Vuitton Malletier/Stéphane Muratet. © Prada. © Dior/Nicolas Dubreuil. © Chanel.

The suite has plush white carpet, a plump sofa, an array of accessories arranged just so and a rail on which a carefully curated selection of clothing is waiting. The difference with any other private-shopping experience is the flight departures board on the wall, tracking take-offs to Chicago, Oslo, Zagreb. I am paying no attention to that. At London Heathrow's (LHR) personal-shopping suite, it is a job requirement of those assisting you to get you to the gate on time.

To be clear, while the service is distinctly VIP, this is not Heathrow's VIP suite, which is called the Windsor Suite and (for a price) is for those so fabulous that they must be protected from the public. This suite – in Terminal 2 or T2 as it is known in LHR-speak – is accessible to passengers from any terminal and is free, no minimum purchase required. You can book in advance online or just present yourself to one of the airport's 20 'shopping brand ambassadors'. (The men are in grey three-piece suits, the women in black dresses.) Your associate either 'travels' with you to the suite or, if you prefer, walks you around the many luxury 'retail partners' Heathrow has to offer, helping you to decide what to buy.

Should you be flying out of Terminal 5, but wish to visit Chanel (only available in Terminal 3), no problem. Well, you do have to clear security at every change of terminal, which is a bore. And between buying, say, a Vuitton Dora bag in T5 and weighing up whether to take the Velvet Boy Chanel flap bag in T2, your transits are by the airport bus service. But while the clock's ticking, there is no need for so much as a bead of sweat on your brow. As Olivier Mamani, the personal shopper assigned to me, puts it, 'We would never let a client miss their holiday because we took too long with a Gucci belt'.

While this is all framed as 'service', what it is really about is money – some £1.8 billion of it was spent in departures, or 'airside', at Heathrow in 2014. We've all noticed how the airport doubles as a gigantic, and increasingly glamorous, shopping mall; the footprint of T2 alone is 40,000m^2, almost four times that of Buckingham Palace. Of note too is that many of the 73.4 million passengers who passed through Heathrow in 2014 en route to 185 destinations are loose with their wallets. Globally, people who are travelling, both for holiday and business, feel freer of the constraints of normal life, which makes them ripe for the temptations of personal luxury goods.

Heathrow doubles as a gigantic, and increasingly glamorous, shopping mall; the footprint of T2 alone is 40,000m^2, four times that of Buckingham Palace.

While the tills in Heathrow's big-brand stores, from Dior to Hermès to Gucci, ring from 5.30am to 11pm (opening times vary between brands), half a world away in the Asian airport hubs the stores run by Duty Free Shopping Group (DFS) are almost never closed. Part of LVMH and headquartered in Hong Kong, DFS operates in 11 countries and its stores were visited by over 260 million travellers in 2014.

Then there's the Middle East and Asia. Dubai Duty Free alone generated £1.25 billion in sales last year. The battle for floor space is so intense that at Incheon in Seoul, Korea, the world's top airport for duty-free and travel-retail sales in 2014, Chanel just lost its two prime slots due to a failed negotiation with local duty-free operators and must wait an estimated five years – when a new terminal will open – to get back in.

Travel retail, which includes ferries, cruise ships and downtown duty-free galleria, as well as airport shopping, is now so vast it is known as the 'Sixth Continent of luxury'. As to who shops across it – well, operators know who you are. Information is harvested from your boarding card, as well as surveys, of which Heathrow alone does over 35,000, in-airport, each year.

For example, data reveals that Chinese nationals returning to Shanghai from London favour sheer coral shades of lipstick, while those travelling to Beijing go for shades that are peachier. (Muscovites like raspberry tones; Sydneysiders, coffee nude tones.) Anecdotal evidence from personal shoppers such as Oliver Mamani reveals that, while clients heading home to Riyadh favour Bulgari's Le Gem fragrance, those on the last flights out from T3 (10.30pm, Lagos) and T5 (10.40pm, Abuja) will often buy duos of fragrance, such as a flacon of Miller Harris and one from Van Cleef & Arpels.

What's the demographic of the shopper? Almost everyone. Or as Josh (who only gives me his first name), who rises at 3.30am to open up the Rolex store at T5, puts it, 'There's no real trend to it. I sold a watch for £13,000 to a casually dressed guy before the store was fully open. I said, "Can you come back at 6am?" He said, "Nah, I'll take it now", so I was selling it as my colleague was starting up the till'. That airport stores are open-fronted, democratic, and have no scary doormen (the security being elsewhere and everywhere) means visitors to the Sixth Continent behave differently from landside. You can wander in, be tempted. Or you can have your target in your sights, in which case, sales associates are trained to complete transactions at speed.

All the big airports offer price incentives – LHR has what it calls 'Heathrow Prices', although the way discounts vary between brands can be confusing. Sticking at Heathrow for now, to get some 20-percent discounts, all you need to do is fly 55 minutes to Leeds Bradford. For others, you must leave the UK; others still, you must leave the EU (the fastest way to do the latter being a hop to Geneva). Some clients are attracted not by price, but by 'airport exclusives'. Mamani recalls a client so keen for a Louis Vuitton Damier toiletry bag, available exclusively airside, that she bought it, flew to Newcastle, came back again and picked it up (LHR offers a Reserve & Collect service across all brands and stores).

Heathrow has one of only two Louis Vuitton airport stores worldwide. (In contrast, Salvatore Ferragamo leads the pack with 138 Sixth Continent locations.) At the Heathrow store, sales associates are required not only to work testing hours (the second shift finishes around 11pm), but also to run several sets of numbers in their heads. 'How much are those boots?' I ask Samira (again, first name only). '£3,150, or if you are flying outside the EU, £2,625,' she replies without missing a beat.

While the tills in Heathrow's big-brand stores, from Dior to Hermès to Gucci, ring from 5.30am to 11pm, in Asian airports they almost never close.

How's this for Sixth Continent economics? The cheapest, short UK flight from Heathrow tends to be that Leeds Bradford hop, which might be worth considering should you be thinking of popping the question with a Tiffany solitaire. It will cost you £89,000 on Bond Street, but £74,000 at Heathrow. 'Would you be surprised if someone bought that £50,000 necklace?' I ask the sales associate at Cartier, pointing at a stunning circlet of diamonds. 'No,' comes the reply. 'We're just surprised by the amount of cash we sometimes have to count.'

Jonathan Coen is Heathrow's retail director. We chat airside at Gordon Ramsey's Plane Food in T5, then walk and talk around Prada, Dior, Tiffany and other stand-out stores in the terminal. Here are his Top 10 Tips from the Sixth Continent:

1. Your boarding pass acts as a 'permission slip'. 'That's how I like to think about it,' he says. 'For short haul and those that travel very regularly with us, your mindset today might be about a personal indulgence, your me time.' (Top tip: the free beauty treatments, including a Jo Malone hand massage and a Crème de la Mer facial)

2. 'If you are a Chinese national returning home, you'll be buying a gift and not only for yourself but for your loved ones,' says Coen. Chinese in LHR like to buy British; at Burberry, Mulberry and Smythson in T2, they know there will be an onslaught before the 10.40pm flight to Beijing. How to guess the gate of your China-bound flight before it is up on the board? You could follow the trail of Chinese passengers past these quintessentially British brands, because they are positioned closest to those departure gates. (This is not a precise science, given the Chinese also love LV.)

3. Heathrow doesn't provide trolleys because the terminals are multi-level. Heathrow bags designed to clip onto your own wheeled hand luggage are coming soon – meaning you can buy as much as you can pull, not just as much as you can carry. 'But passengers need to be aware of any entry restrictions or allowances that apply within their end destination,' counsels Coen.

4. Paul Smith is tucked up by an escalator in T5 out of choice. Ditto, Rolex sitting right near the loos in T2. Both are strategically located in the sight lines of those headed to the first-class lounge. Hey, big spender.

5. Heathrow operates a 'single till'. The more made from the shops, the less airport running costs are loaded onto your flight ticket. In other words, the more engagement rings sold by Tiffany, the cheaper your flight to Tenerife.

6. While the recommendation to use personal shoppers is mostly word of mouth in the UK, the service is actively promoted in China and throughout the Middle East. 'We're trying to reach out of the airport environment in a much more overt way, to talk about the offers that we have, to create pre-awareness,' says Coen.

7. While more private-shopping suites are planned across the terminals, the alternative, right now, is to contact your personal shopper in advance at www.boutique.heathrow.com and he or she can bring goods to where you are. After the ultra-private Windsor suite, used by royalty, presidents and pop stars, the swankiest lounge is Etihad's[1] 'The Residence' (T4)

8. Heathrow's pop-up advertisements can be changed in six minutes depending on the taste of the dominant group in the terminal at any time. A retail digital-display station showcasing Pimm's[2] (60,000 bottles of it were sold in 2014 and it is most popular with passengers flying to the US) can shift to

Salvatore Ferragamo
Chloé
Chloé

CHANEL
GUERLAIN
LANCÔME
CHANEL

BOTTEGA VENETA

- YVES SAINT LAURENT -

EMPORIO ARMANI

Salvatore Ferragamo

© Aéroports de Paris/Photos: Jérôme Galland, Mikaël Lafontan & Olivier Seignette. © DFS Group.

Salvatore Ferragamo

Cartier
Cartier

RALPH LAUREN

a whisky promotion when the Japanese, who prefer hard liquor, are coming through.

9. No cunning tactics, like making the seats uncomfortable or reducing the Wi-Fi signal, are used to force you to stand up and shop. Happy passengers make happy shoppers. Heathrow travel retail thrives on 'your magic moment', says Coen, 'so if you have a bad experience as a traveller, your overall experience at Heathrow is poor. That's not something that we want'. Neither are delays good for shopping, says Coen: 'We want our customers to travel through the airport as quickly as possible'.

10. Who eats those jumbo Toblerones[3], ubiquitous in the Sixth Continent? 'We know people eat them in the lounge,' says Coen. 'They'll eat them in the aircraft. They'll eat them when they get to their destination. If you're travelling on business and you're arriving at your hotel and you want a bit of sugar, you know… It's the quintessential travel gift, but we know people treat themselves, too.'

Luxury travel retail began with the jet age in 1960, when Robert Miller and Charles Feeney opened the first duty-free store at Kai Tak International Airport in Hong Kong, followed two years later by the first duty-free shop in the United States at Honolulu's airport, thus laying the cornerstones of the DFS empire. Alongside Sephora[4] and Paris department store Le Bon Marché, DFS is now part of LVMH's Selective Retailing division, which had sales of £7 billion in 2014. We talked to Philippe Schaus, current chairman and CEO of DFS Group.

One client was so keen for a Louis Vuitton toiletry bag, available exclusively airside, that she bought it, flew to Newcastle, came back again and picked it up.

Who inhabits this Sixth Continent?

Philippe Schaus: More than 50 percent of all luxury-goods purchases take place outside consumers' home countries. Luxury brands are global brands, yet their story is a local story. Burberry is a British brand; Louis Vuitton and Hermès are French; Gucci is an Italian brand. People like to shop these brands in their own countries, of course, but they are even more interested in shopping these brands in a place where they are even more accessible or ideally in the brand's home country. Asian travellers who shop in France are four times more likely to buy French products than Italian.

What are your insights into Chinese travellers?

Chinese travellers accounted for more than 100 million people last year. That's expected to double to 200 million by 2020, which is more than the population of many countries.

Can you buy the same luxuries right across the continent?

We have big international hubs – Hong Kong, New York, Los Angeles, Singapore. Then you have airports that are really identified with a destination, such as Okinawa, Bali or Sydney. Equally, we have downtown stores in Honolulu and Okinawa, and we are soon going to open in Cambodia. Our first downtown store in Europe will be in Venice, the city from which Marco Polo, the first luxury traveller, left to discover China, and to where he returned with a lot of luxury items to Europe. Venice has more than 20 million tourists from all around the world. In that iconic city packed with thousands of little tourist shops, there is no place where, under one roof, you can find the best luxury brands with a strong local touch.

Do people shop differently airside?

You know that you can only carry so much. You cannot buy anything too bulky. What we try to do is bring a luxury experience to the customer while, at the same time, being extremely efficient in terms of the transaction. The offer is typically a bit narrower, very well stocked and with a very well-functioning cash register.

Is everything pre-packed out the back?

No. I personally believe that when you buy a luxury bag, you really want to take the bag that you held in your hand because a luxury brand is an individual item even if there are thousands made of the same one. It's made out of natural product; it's not always identical. The product you buy is intimate with you.

Is time suspended airside? Airports offer whisky at 8am.

When it is 8 o'clock in the morning for you, it might be 8 o'clock in the evening for somebody else. If you fly from Europe to Asia via Abu Dhabi, which is one of the airports we operate in, you could arrive in the middle of night, the middle of the day and if you like whisky, cognac and they propose you try it, it could be the right time for you. And yes, in Abu Dhabi, they do authorize the sale of alcohol in the airport. The places that are stricter, we are not present there.

Given that the expert says people like to buy luxury goods near their source, we head off to Hohhot Baita International airport, the hub for Inner Mongolia, China. The big seller here is 1436, perhaps the finest cashmere brand in the world and among the rare true luxury brands to have come out of the Greater China region. It is the high-fashion line of the Erdos Group[5], which claims to account for over one-third of the world's cashmere production.

At Hohhot Baita, travellers finger the brand's feather-light scarves whose fibres are 14 microns in diameter and 36 millimetres in length (hence the name). The top-selling colours are bright blue and soft pink. The same colour palate appeals 500km away at Beijing Capital International Airport, where 1436 is among the best sellers in Terminal 3. That 1436 products are established as the national gifts China presents to heads of foreign states further encourages its allure on the Sixth Continent.

Another huge luxury category on the Sixth Continent is sunglasses. So we caught up with Francis Gros, head of global channels at Luxottica Group[6], a man who travels so incessantly that we can only catch up with him by phone.

You're always travelling. Tell us, which is the world's best airport?

Francis Gros: I have to answer politically correctly; I have many friends in the airport industry! When it comes to transiting, you have competition that starts from Istanbul up to Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Doha, where's there's even a squash court in the business lounge. But definitely Heathrow, for the pleasure of the restaurants, Gordon Ramsey's Plane Food and the caviar bar, which is nice before boarding.

How fast can I buy a pair of sunglasses?

I like to say we offer Formula One retail to cash-rich, time-poor consumers. You really have to focus on training the staff for the two-to-five-minute sale.

But I have optical lenses. Can you do that at an airport?

Some of our [airside] stores are able to provide quick optical frame and lens services, but this is not the norm. Landside, of course. Take German airports, they are also local hubs that thousands of people are working around. If you look at Munich airport in particular, I think around 70-80,000 people work around the airport. And if you want to shop on Sunday in Germany, you would find that the only place where you can do so is landside at an airport.

Which of your brands sell best?

Ray-Ban and Oakley are our absolute pillars; they are so strong, they are universal. Then, depending on geographic location: Burberry, Michael Kors for Moscow, Prada too for Moscow, Dolce & Gabbana. At Heathrow T4, we know that we need to offer a specific nose stat that suits the Asian nose; you need to have them in the proper fit, otherwise for those on Korean Air, it's a no sale. And you need to offer what is liked by Middle Eastern passengers – Burberry and Coach are very popular – as Emirates and Qatar also fly out of T4.

I'm obsessed with the Sixth Continent's ubiquitous gold luxury. Tell me, Mr. Gros, who buys those jumbo Toblerones?

They sell very well wherever there is a Filipino community flying home. I'm sure it's strong in Kuwait airport where up to a few years ago, Tang orange juice also sold so strongly [airside] for the same reason.

Another dawn, another flight.

I meet with Olivier Mamani every time I pass through Heathrow for this story and each time he proves style-savvy and also unflappable. Which he needs to be as his official-looking uniform makes him a frequent target for harried travellers fretting about missed connections. He deflects them courteously to the passenger ambassadors (there are 129 of them at LHR; easy to spot, they wear purple). But I nearly break him. I tell him I want to buy underwear. The best he can do is a pair of Wolford tights with control top and gusset. He seems visibly upset he can't do better so I try to cheer him up with my Toblerone question.

Who buys them, Olivier?

'Many of my clients!' he exclaims immediately, warming to the subject of giant Swiss chocolate bars. 'I had a lovely lady who purchased one that cost £86 and was literally a metre long. I remember because she was taking it back to Geneva.'

1. Etihad is the United Arab Emirates' second-largest and fastest-growing airline. On one of its three Airbus 380s, passengers can pay £13,000 for a one-way ticket that comes with a butler, bedroom and private bathroom.

2. Pimm's was created by James Pimm, an oyster-bar owner in London, as an aid to digestion. In Britain, the drink is now closely associated with summer sporting events: during the two weeks of Wimbledon this year, spectators were served 230,000 glasses of Pimm's.

3. Toblerone was invented by Swiss chocolate-maker Theodor Tobler in 1908, its name a portmanteau of its inventor's surname and *torrone*, an Italian nougat. Toblerone became the first patented milk chocolate bar with almonds and honey. The brand is today owned by US conglomerate Mondelez.

4. Sephora was created by businessman Dominique Mandonnaud who in 1997 sold the brand to LVMH for 1.6 billion French francs so that he could concentrate on his real passion: sculpture.

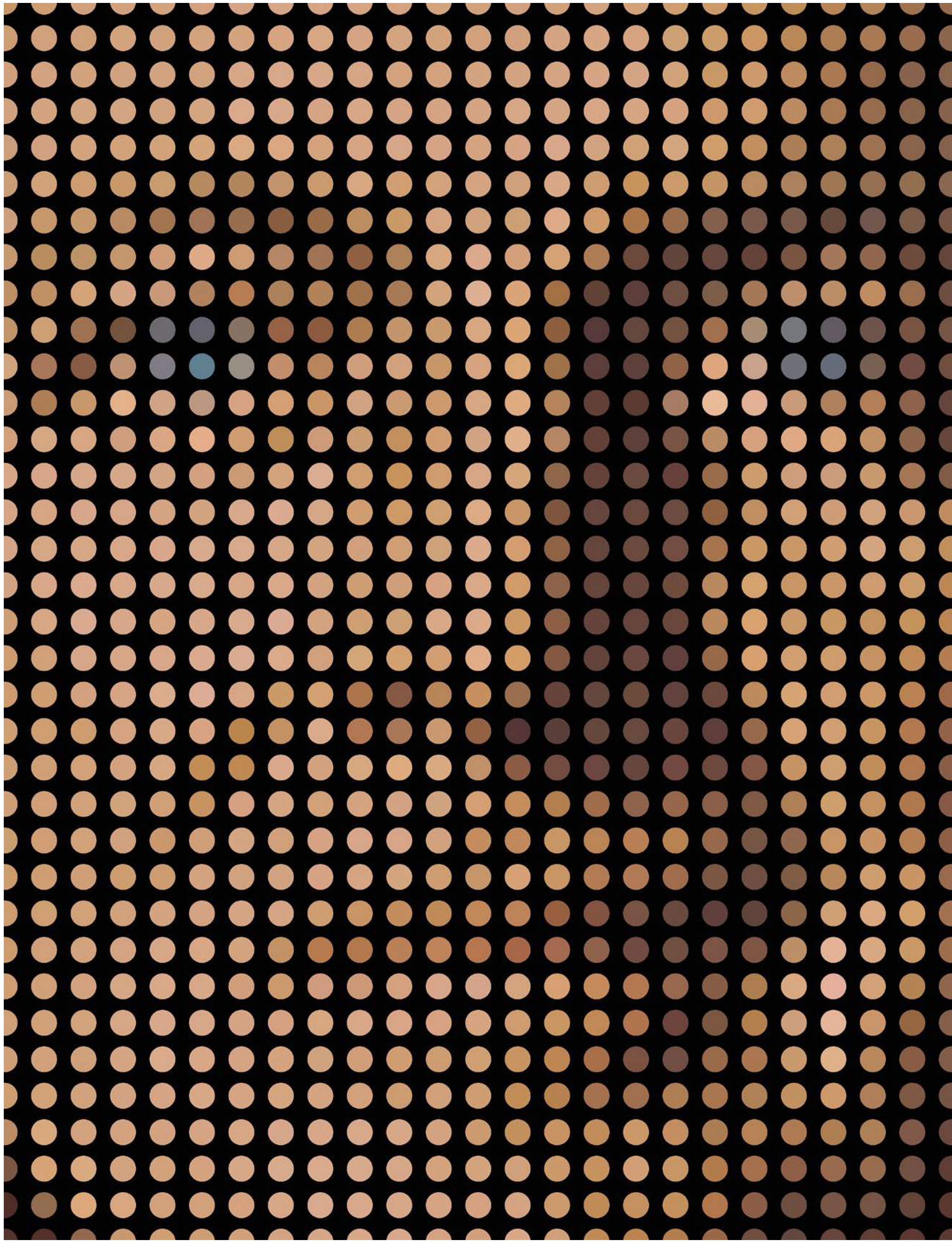
5. Erdos Group is a large Chinese conglomerate with interests in cashmere, coal, electricity, metallurgy and chemicals. Erdos, says the group's website, means 'Serried palaces in the grassland' in Mongolian.

6. Founded in 1961 in Italy, Luxottica, the world's largest eyewear company, had £5.6 billion in sales last year. It houses its large collection of historical eyewear at Museo dell'Ottica, situated in its hometown of Agorno in the Dolomites.

The legendary…

‘Has elegance disappeared?’

Hubert de Givenchy on the childhood dreams and occasional disappointments of his life in fashion.



By Hans Ulrich Obrist
Illustration by François Berthoud

The Hubert de Givenchy story is a tale of talent and names. His own, firstly: Comte Hubert James Taffin de Givenchy, born into an aristocratic family in 1927. Followed by others: Jacques Fath[1] and Robert Piguet[2], couture giants he almost immediately began to work for when he moved to Paris aged 17. Then Lucien Lelong[3], with whom he learned his trade alongside the then-unknown Christian Dior and Pierre Balmain. And Elsa Schiaparelli, who hired him as her first assistant and creative director of her ready-to-wear line. But back then Hubert de Givenchy was in a hurry to make a name for himself, and in 1952, aged just 24, he opened his own label and first store at 8 Rue Alfred de Vigny, Paris, a beacon of daring in a neighbourhood of bourgeois respectability.

> **‘It was just after the war. Entering the world of fashion was another way of trying to forget the difficult years that we’d been through.’**

His innovative approach, immediately seen in his ‘Separates’ collection of easy-to-wear skirts and blouses, soon made his house’s reputation and attracted new names to his store. Like not-quite-princesses (Wallis Simpson), soon-to-be princesses (Grace Kelly), and the woman Givenchy considered nobility itself and who would become his friend and muse for 40 years: Audrey Hepburn. ‘With her,’ he said recently, ‘work became an act of joy.’ And that sheer pleasure produced a remarkable collection of clothing over the years, including *that* little black dress worn by Hepburn in *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* – a dress that became an icon.

Then there was the pioneering work, such as the first ever luxury ready-to-wear line (Givenchy Université in 1954) and new perfumes (L’Interdit with Hepburn as its face, launched in 1957). If, as the decades went by, he put his name on menswear, accessories and even cars (the Lincoln Mark V Givenchy[4]), it was never for simply commercial reasons but rather as a way to support his first and real love: haute couture. Because in the 43 years Hubert de Givenchy spent making women sublime in all those beautiful, personalized clothes, he never forgot the fashion essentials he had learned from his mentor, Cristóbal Balenciaga: the sheer power of quiet elegance, the sensual poetry of the pure line, and the simple, yet wonderful romance to be found in dressing up.

Since retiring from fashion in 1995, Hubert de Givenchy has largely kept out of the public eye, preferring to spend time at his *hôtel particulier* on the Rive Gauche and his country estate, Château Le Jonchet[5], two hours southwest of Paris – from where he told us about his dreams, drawing and why fashion is not what it was.

Hans Ulrich Obrist: Which designers and artists influenced you?
Hubert de Givenchy: I must say Cristóbal Balenciaga.

What triggered your desire to become a designer? Did you have the ambition to be a designer when you attended the École des Beaux-Arts?
Yes, I wanted to learn how to draw. My ambition was to become an assistant in a couture house and to become a couturier myself.

What was your relationship with fashion in your youth?
I admired the work of Balenciaga and of course that of other couturiers. I was already very selective.

When you began designing what was the environment and how did that environment inspire you?
It was just after the war. There was no environment; it was another way of looking at things and trying to forget the difficult years that we had been through. Entering the world of fashion certainly brought great joy into my life and work.

You mention you were touched by the work of Cristóbal Balenciaga and you’ve said that he was your inspiration. Why did his work resonate with you? What did you learn from him?
Everything. His exceptional work, his extraordinary career, his creativity, his values and above all, his elegance. When I first met him, I was influenced by his self-belief, his refusal to cheat, his simplicity and his honesty. It’s true that his work really resonated with me. I was in awe of him. I was fascinated by his meticulousness. He knew how to do everything – cut a dress, assemble it from a pattern. He had worked in London and elsewhere, and had forged his own vision of fashion through which he was able to express his creativity. He allowed me to prove myself and to develop my own ideas and creativity.

You’re a collector of art and sculpture. Can you talk a bit about your collections?
I don’t like using the word ‘collector’. I like beautiful things like a lot of other people and I’ve had the opportunity of acquiring some sculptures.

Of all the great personalities that you met, who are the people – aside from Cristóbal Balenciaga – who left the greatest impression?
My mother and Audrey Hepburn.

> **‘When I first met Cristóbal Balenciaga, I was in awe of his self-belief, his refusal to cheat, his simplicity, his honesty, and above all, his elegance.’**

Your creations are so often associated with Audrey Hepburn, as well as Jackie Kennedy. Please could you tell us about your first meeting with them and describe your experiences designing clothes for them?
Before meeting Audrey Hepburn, I met Mrs. Kennedy. She loved what I was doing and she trusted me. When she became the First Lady of the United States, her feelings remained unchanged and we often worked together. Later, I had the great fortune to meet Audrey. At the time, she had a major film career and not only required dresses for herself, but also for the screen, which demanded a lot more creativity. On the other hand, Mrs. Kennedy simply picked out dresses from the collection. It was an immense pleasure to work with these extraordinary personalities and I had different experiences working with each of these legendary women.

As a designer, did you have any rules? What was important to you?
To do my job and strive to do my best: something that I learned from my mother. All my life I have tried to forge my own path and follow it.

You used to sketch. Do you still sketch today?
Yes. I learned to draw and I had a reputation for having ‘*un bon coup de crayon*’. I always draw when I have the desire to or when I feel inspired.

Of all your designs, which are you most proud of?
That is not an easy question for me to answer. The only thing I’m proud of is to have pursued and realized my childhood dream for many years.

Do you have any unrealized projects?
Of course, like everyone else.

Do you still follow fashion now?
No, I no longer look at fashion. The world is a very different place now. I sometimes ask myself, ‘Has elegance disappeared? Is there no longer any direction in contemporary fashion?’ It all makes very little sense to me.

Is fashion a young person’s game? Or is it possible to continue designing all one’s life?
If you are passionate about fashion then it is a wonderful profession that can bring you much satisfaction and, of course, occasional disappointments. The ability of the designer to create his life according to his desire never changes.

Do you stay in contact with many people in contemporary fashion? If so, what do you ask them about the industry?
No, unfortunately most fashion designers that I had the honour of meeting are no longer with us: Madame Grès, Monsieur Fath, Christian Dior, Cristóbal Balenciaga, Yves Saint Laurent.

[1] Before his death aged 42 in 1954, Jacques Fath was a leading light of French post-war fashion known for dressing ‘young chic Parisiennes’. His celebrity clients included Ava Gardner, Greta Garbo, Rita Hayworth and Eva Perón, while Givenchy, Valentino and Guy Laroche all worked for the designer before launching their own labels.

[2] Swiss-born designer Robert Piguet (1898-1953) is perhaps best known today for giving Christian Dior his start in fashion, as well as his original perfumes, such as Bandit and Fracas. Yet until illness forced him to close his house in 1951, he was perhaps the most renowned of the designers who refounded Parisian fashion after the Second World War.

[3] Lucien Lelong (1889-1958) is now seen as the saviour of the French couture industry during the 1940-1944 Nazi occupation of Paris. As a prominent designer and president of the Chambre Syndicale de la Couture he successfully negotiated with the Germans to ensure that the couture industry remained in Paris and was not transferred to Berlin and Vienna. He is now said to have saved 12,000 workers from deportation and forced labour in German industries.

[4] The Lincoln Continental Mark V Givenchy was a special ‘designer edition’ of the US carmaker’s luxury coupe. It was produced from 1977-1979 alongside other designer editions from Bill Blass, Cartier and Pucci. The models were reissued each year with slightly different specifications. For example, the Givenchy came in Dark Jade in 1977, Midnight Jade in 1978, and Crystal Blue Moondust Metallic in 1979.

[5] Situated 150kms southwest of Paris in Romilly-sur-Aigre, the 17th-century Château du Jonchet has been Hubert de Givenchy’s country residence since 1974. Over the years he has completely restored the entire *château* and created formal gardens based upon the design of those at the convent of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice. Givenchy has said that the house is ‘built like a haute-couture dress’.

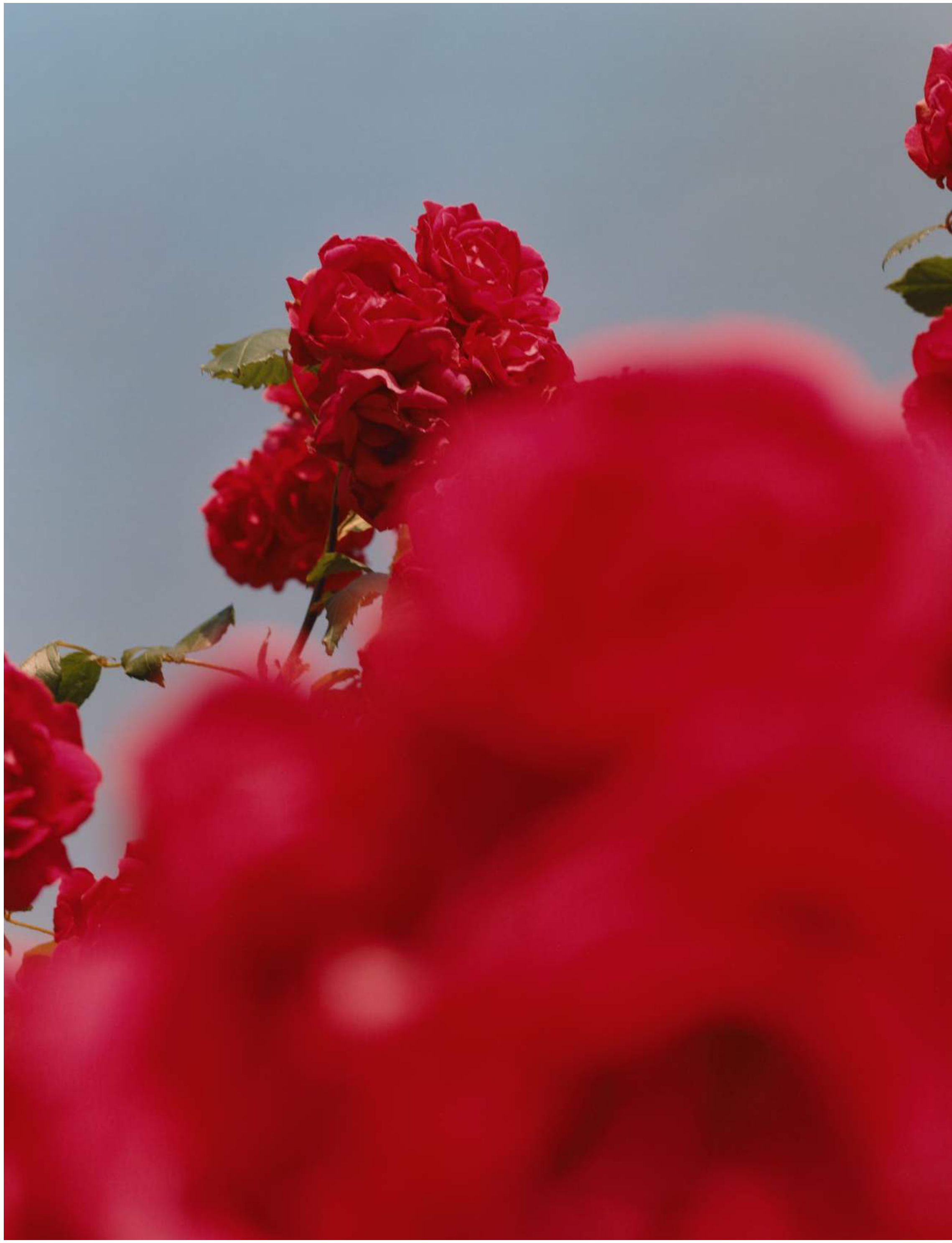
Archives Hubert de Givenchy 1969-1995

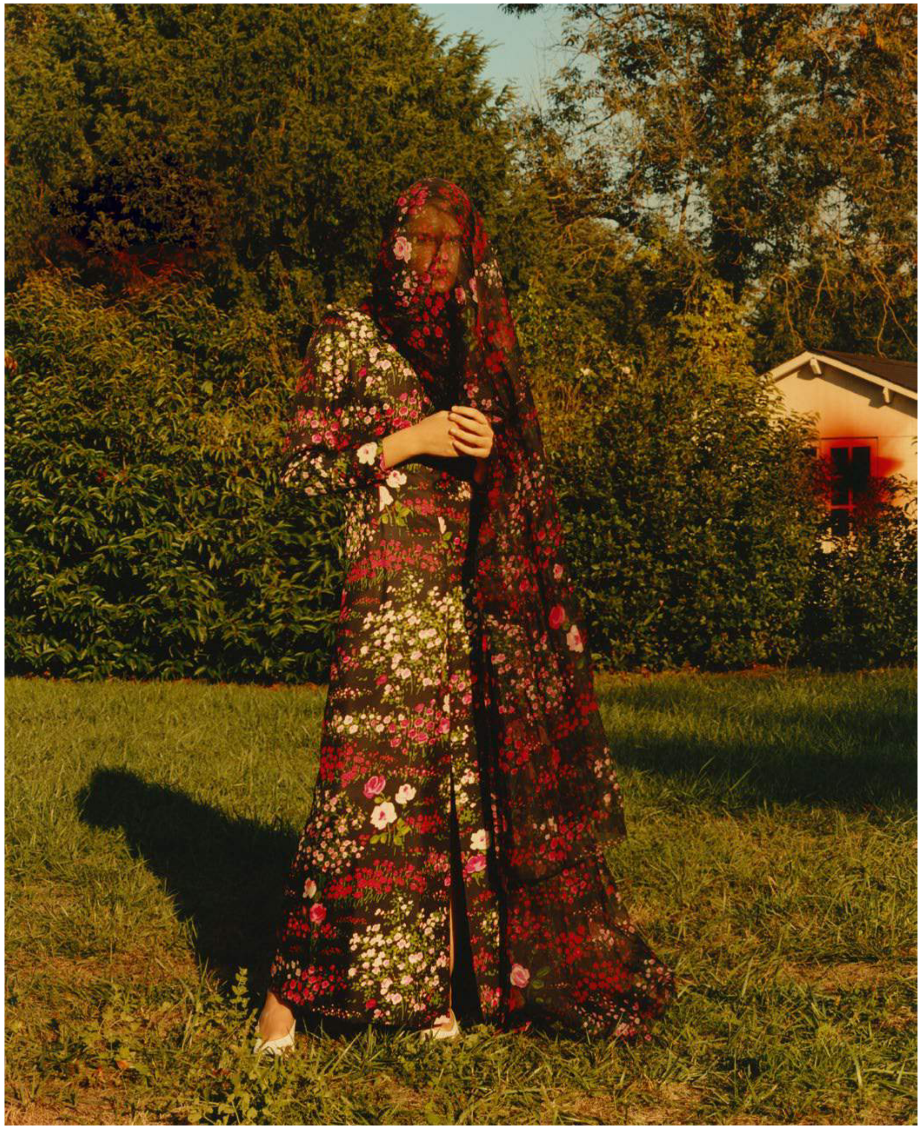
Photographs by Jamie Hawkesworth
Styling by Marie-Amélie Sauvé

Printemps/Eté 1995

Automne/Hiver 1980

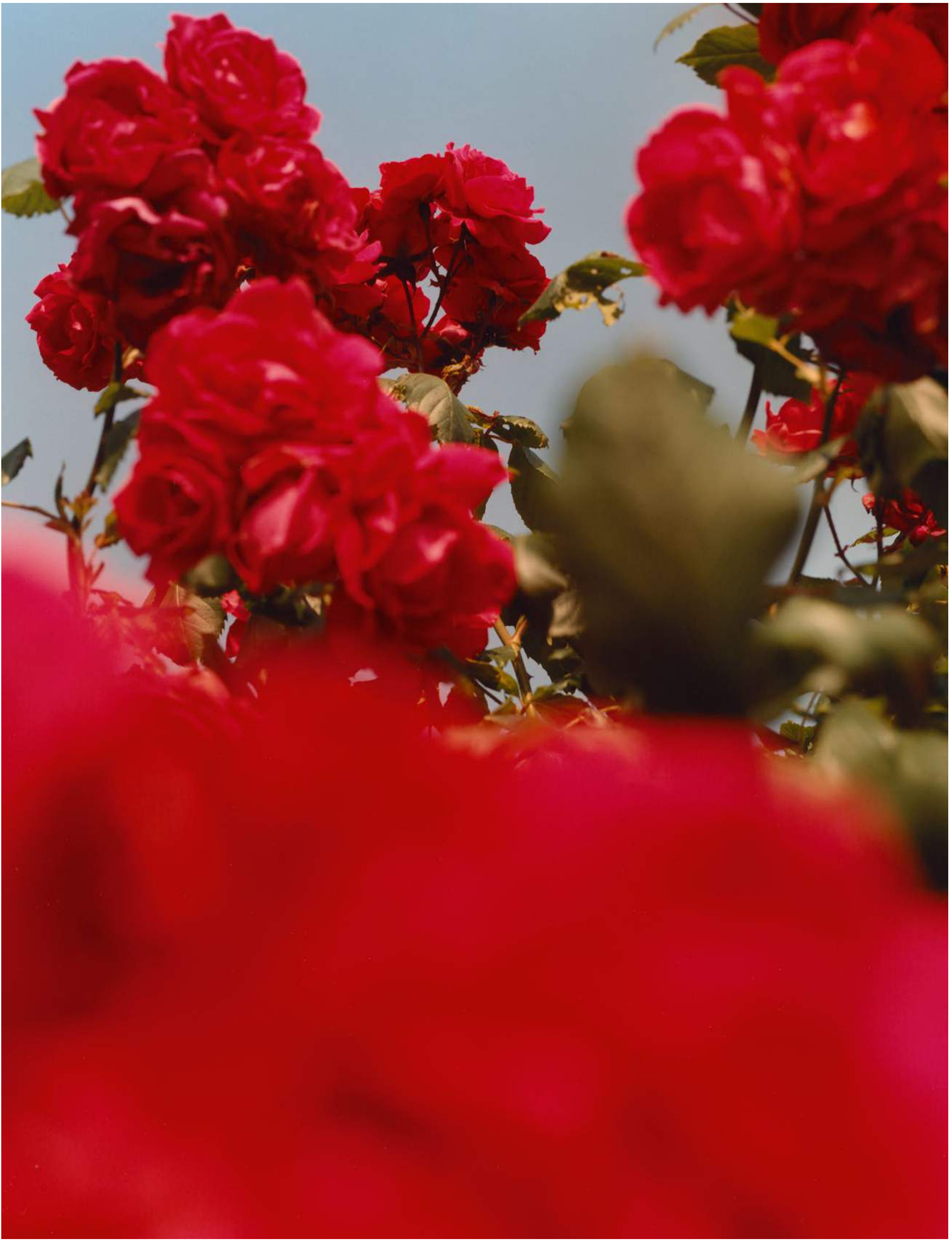
Automne/Hiver 1989





Printemps/Eté 1971

Automne/Hiver 1979



Automne/Hiver 1980

Automne/Hiver 1993

Automne/Hiver 1969

Printemps/Eté 1972

Models: Mad Manning at The Society and Frankie Akhurst at CK Casting. Hair: Tomohiro Ohasi c/o Management + Artists using Bumble and bumble. Make-up: Christine Corbel c/o Management + Artists using M.A.C. Manicure: Laura Forget c/o Artlist. Set Design: Sylvain Cabouat c/o Michele Filomeno. Seamstress: Carole Savaton. Photo Assistants: Edd Horder and Tex Bishop. Styling Assistants: Rae Boxer, Marie-Valentine Girbal, Angelo DeSanto, Fanny Ourevitch and Pia Abbar. Hair Assistant: Sayaka Otama. Make-up Assistant: Anne Amerighi. Set-design Assistants: Emmanuel Vantillard, Aurore Storny and Arthur Braillon. Production by Laura Holmes Production. Shoes by Arche and Martiniano. Gloves by Portolano.Earrings (worn attached) by Belmacz. Boxers by YUASA.

‘I tried to fit in, but it didn’t work.’

If you want to know what the next generation is really thinking, listen to Tavi Gevinson.

By Jonathan Wingfield
Photographs by Brigitte Lacombe

For a publication that generally steers its focus towards people within the fashion industry, Tavi Gevinson is a complex and intriguing *System* subject – an ever-evolving anomaly operating both in and beyond the very system we like to explore. Her story is the stuff of outsider folklore: in 2008, an 11-year-old bespectacled suburban introvert starts a 'style blog', finds herself (controversially) sitting front row next to Anna Wintour, becomes disillusioned and retreats back to high school.

Destined to be remembered as a quirky also-ran in the annals of fashion, Tavi simply chose a different path. Or paths. In the ensuing years, she's been in Hollywood movies, moved to New York and starred on Broadway (where she returns next spring to play Mary Warren in Arthur Miller's classic *The Crucible*); she's delivered a TED Talk entitled *Still Figuring It Out*, which skilfully suggests why media representations of women should be complex and contradictory; and, as if to prove the aforementioned point, has been the face of Clinique, as well as one of 12 women (alongside the likes of Yoko Ono, Patti Smith, Serena Williams and Fran Lebowitz) photographed by Annie Leibovitz for 2016's redefining Pirelli calendar. And she's still a teenager.

But it's perhaps Rookie, the website and occasional publication she's run since 2011, that continues to best define what Tavi represents to the millions of young women (and men, but mainly women) who consider her a guiding voice. Championing the sort of writing, doodling and self-expression that for decades never left the padlocked diaries of teenage girls, Rookie's influence on youth culture is at least as tangible as the queues around the Supreme store. Or, as writer Eva Wiseman neatly puts it, 'by unpicking the awkwardness of female adolescence and providing a place to talk about it, [Rookie has] helped feminism become almost fashionable'.

Were you a bedroom fashionista or more the bookish type? When you first arrived in the fashion industry you seemed like the perfect mix of the two.
Yes, I think a bit of both. In elementary school I read constantly and did Reading Olympics, which was really fun; my dad was an English teacher and my mother's a visual artist who always encouraged us to be creative. I wasn't interested in fashion until I discovered style blogs when I was about 11. I wouldn't say I really had a sense of style at the time, but I just kind of knew what I didn't like.

Were you popular at school?
I tried to fit in, but it didn't work. That was when everyone in my age group started getting cell phones and I asked this kind of 'popular' boy for his number and he just said, '123, 456, 789...' And I was like, 'Oh, I see, I'm not going to get what I'm looking for *here*'.

So you turned to fashion?
My friend outside of school, who I knew from doing plays, had an older sister who did a fashion blog. I was immediately struck by how much confidence and style she had. But what impressed me most was how she'd talk about the reactions she got at school, and how she just found them amusing.

People were mocking her?
Yes, but she didn't care, which felt empowering. I remember Anna Dello Russo saying that when she was little her mom said something like, 'If you wear this you won't be cool', and she replied, 'But I don't want to be cool, I want to be fashion!' For me, I wanted to be interesting and creative, although that's not to say I wasn't immune to feelings of wanting to be pretty.

So seeing this blog inspired you to start your own.
Yes, I started Style Rookie in 2008 as soon as I saw other blogs, but, you know, I never thought lots of people would read it. It wasn't like I was building up my style and then saying to myself, 'I'm ready to share this with the world'. And anyway, back then no one did fashion blogging as a career or to get invited to shows; it was just something you did after school.

Were you aware of fashion beyond blogs?
My friend's older sister Stephanie once sent me a list of magazines she liked, so I'd walk to the Book Table in Oak Park[1] after school and buy *Dazed & Confused*, *i-D*, foreign editions of *Vogue*; I remember calling the store and bugging them because I knew there was this 3D issue of *Dazed & Confused* coming out and they were like, 'Stop calling us, what is so special about this thing?', and I was like, 'But it's 3D!' Over time I got to know *all* the fashion stuff coming out.

'I asked this popular boy at school for his number and he just said, 123, 456, 789, and I was like, Oh, I see, I'm not going to get what I'm looking for *here*.'

'Back then, no one did fashion blogging as a career or to get invited to the shows; it was just something you did in your bedroom after school.'

Tell me something from those magazines that struck a chord.
I was really interested in people's processes: I remember learning that the Rodarte girls hadn't studied fashion, but that they'd bought and cut up a Chanel dress to see how it had been constructed. Or how Alber Elbaz would sketch while watching CNN. I also remember reading an interview with Tim Burton in *Interview* conducted by Danny Elfman[2] where he said that when he was a child he wasn't really scared of ghosts and goblins, but he was scared of teachers and dentists and his parents' friends, and that helped with my demonization of everyone I encountered at school!

Who were the first fashion designers you were attracted to?
It was straight to Margiela, Rodarte and Comme. I was obsessed with Rei Kawakubo and Japanese street style, and a book called *Style Deficit Disorder*[3]. I remember going on Style.com and clicking through every single designer from that season until I found something I liked. When I first looked at Comme I didn't really get it, which is true of a lot of the things that then become my favourites.

You didn't 'get' Comme, but it seemed interesting.
Exactly. I remember I would really dig around for news about Rei Kawakubo: there was a piece about her in the *New Yorker* where they asked her what makes her laugh and she just said, 'People falling down', and to me that was *awesome*!

Let's talk about your own rapport with clothes and image back then. Did you have an amazing local thrift store or was it just rooting through your mum's closet?
There was a Salvation Army store where I would get clothes. Later on, I would go on trips to L.A. and get a lot of flea-market stuff, or visit this antique store in Pasadena. But you have to remember, I was 12, so I didn't have a lot of options to buy clothes.

Style Rookie didn't feel like it was about actual consuming anyway.
No, it wasn't about shopping: although later on I would get sent clothes from designers. I remember when I started to make money from the occasional weird campaign or something, I would save up for years and then have to convince my dad to allow me to spend my own money on a Hussein Chalayan dress.

Would you agree that you presented yourself in a way that was atypical, especially for an 11-year-old growing up in suburban America?
I just felt like whatever was right was whatever I liked. Plus, I discovered enough of a community online who liked the same things as me, so I didn't feel the pressure to look a different way. When I was younger what I admired about women like Iris Apfel and Anna Piaggi was that everyone would refer to them and say, 'The wonderful thing about reaching a certain age is that you just stop caring about what other people think'. And I thought to myself, 'Well, why don't I just do that *now*; why waste time?'

Is style overrated?
No, but it's over-*judged*. Someone's style should be like their sense of humour or taste in food: no one ever says you've got bad taste in food or a bad sense of humour because it's just the stuff that you naturally respond to. I think style – for me at least – is the same.

Looking back now, how self-aware do you think you were at that time?
I think it was largely a question of just having some childlike confidence left over, and trying to get as much mileage out of that as possible. I mean, I look back at some of those photos and it's like, 'Oh, I had *no* awareness of my body or that it was even changing'. I wasn't interested in make-up, for example; it just seemed irrelevant.

Style Rookie started in 2008, which was a key year: the year of the financial crisis, and the year when the fashion industry as a whole finally started embracing the digital world. Did you ever see yourself as part of that shift towards DIY online culture?
I was too young to notice, but because I was young I got attention in the fashion-blogging community, which at the time was still completely off the radar. That made it easy to keep going without feeling like I was doing market research or trying to figure out what would get more comments or what people would respond to more.

What about the reaction back in the real world, back in school?
It was certainly easier to go to school and get picked on for what I was wearing

knowing that all these other people thought that I had become something of an authority on fashion. It meant the world to me that this one kid at school said, 'I just love seeing what you wear every day; I am excited to see it, it's like art'.

What was the first sign that your blog was hitting the fashion industry's radar?
I got an e-mail from the Rodarte sisters saying, 'Hey, our friend Miranda showed us a video you made'. They later told me that their friend was Miranda July[4]. But the moment it really escalated for me was when Dasha Zhukova wrote saying she wanted me to come to London with other bloggers to curate a section of her first issue of *Pop* magazine. While we were there she asked if I wanted to be on the cover and I remember talking about it a lot with my dad who'd travelled with me; he'd talked to [*Pop* co-founder] Ashley Heath who had told him, 'Fame is utterly meaningless but it can give you power'. That's stuck with me. People might mistake it for 'evil dictatorship power', but I see it more as a question of gaining access and doing what it is I want to do.

Having options.
Yes, choice. When *Pop* came out, Dasha flew my dad and me to New York for Fashion Week, and that was when I started showing up in the front row and stuff, although a lot of the time *not* in front rows, but you don't see those photos!

Tell me about going to New York for the shows.
Looking back at it just makes me feel glad that I got a lot of the 'Wowwww!' out of the way early on.

Didn't you find attending the shows intimidating?
I was excited, I was thrilled, but I was also trying to keep my wits intact. I remember at the Rag & Bone show a guy behind me said quite loudly, 'Is that a boy or a girl?' and I was thinking, 'Hey, you're the mean one, there is nothing wrong with me looking androgynous.' It was like being back at school.

Were there moments during that week that made you stop and think about what you were getting yourself into?
I remember my dad and I going to the Alexander Wang after-party at Milk Studios. Courtney Love was playing and when I think back to walking through that crowd it wasn't all, 'Wow, this is everything I've ever wanted', it was more like, 'Eurgh, gross!'

You weren't as awestruck as perhaps you should have been.
Right, and there is this certain lifestyle that comes with all that, like a party lifestyle. It's kind of helpful when you're that age to see people who are out of their minds.

They should make the Wang after-party a national curriculum field trip.
[Laughs] It's like seeing the movie *Kids* way too young! I mean, it obviously helped to be with my dad or my mum. For them, those moments were almost like an anthropological case study; well, not just anthropological because they also had a lot of respect for everyone we came across. Some of my fondest memories are of being in-between shows, getting a bagel with my dad and us just talking about how amazing that designer or editor was to talk to.

Who made the biggest impression on the two of you?
I guess Rodarte. We have since spent a lot of time together with them. I think my dad had concerns about the world I seemed to be dabbling in, and they were an example of people who were truly concerned with their own art and were really passionate. I attribute so much of my sense of wonder to them.

You say your dad had concerns, which is probably to be expected, but did he also have his own 'Wowww!' moments?
Right back before the whole fashion week thing started happening, I remember showing my dad a binder I had made full of runway photos. He didn't respond at all, which makes him sound like a bad father, which he isn't; he's an English teacher who refreshes his wardrobe every two years at Eddie Bauer[5]. Anyway, one time at fashion week he was talking to an editor and he said, 'I think it's really great that you're supporting Tavi; she makes me really proud because when I was growing up everyone just wore Eddie Bauer'. And he was stood right there wearing head to toe Eddie Bauer [laughs].

What was it like returning to school after your first fashion week?
I remember sitting in the airport with my dad and crying because, like, now I have to go back to school and I'm never going to get to do anything like this again! I was completely aware that the cycle is so brisk and of the whole 15-minutes-of-fame thing – it was sad.

'It was certainly easier being picked on at school for what I was wearing, knowing that all these other people thought I'd become an authority on fashion.'

Are you still like that about things?
Oh, absolutely. Right now, I am still recovering from the play that I did, *This Is Our Youth*, ending. I was saying to my friend, 'I'll never get to do anything like this again!' It reminded me of Joan Didion's essay *On Keeping a Notebook*[6] in which she says something like, 'Notebook keepers are afflicted during childhood of a pre-disposed sense of loss'. And I think that kind of sums me up pretty well.

The more prominent you became, the more I remember people in the industry regarding you as this polarizing figure. What do you recall about that?
I remember one of the first negative things that got written about me: it was really snarky, saying that the only reason people were interested in Style Rookie was because of my age, and that I probably wasn't even writing it. After that I stopped the blog and took a break for a bit.

That must have been upsetting.
It was. I lined our basement walls with newspapers and took photos of myself wearing all black outfits, and I wrote a whole thing about how condescending it was. I am almost ashamed that it has stuck with me to this day, but I remember writing something like, 'I'm sorry, we are talking about the fashion industry here; it's not exactly the perfect democracy!' I remember feeling good about writing that, thinking it was a thoughtful response with a good measure of sass thrown in.

By now, had your newfound fashion industry status – whether critical or otherwise – reached your school? I mean, were people aware you were flying off to fashion shows?
People would come up to me and be like, 'Do you know Miley Cyrus?' Just throwaway comments. But I recently got an e-mail from this boy who I shared a few classes with but who I never really talked to. He wrote, 'I don't know if you remember me, but I just wanted to tell you that Style Rookie was really important for me at high school; it changed the way I felt about being a guy, and assured me that I didn't feel I had to identify with a certain idea of masculinity. I have seen you saying in interviews that kids at your school ignored you or weren't interested, but that wasn't true – we were just intimidated and actually looked up to you'. And I was like, 'Oh, great! Why didn't you say that at the time? It would have changed *everything*!'

Let's talk about your decision to stop the Style Rookie blog, retreat from the fashion shows, and launch Rookie as a broader platform for writing, self-expression and life beyond fashion. Was that something that just naturally played itself out, or was it a conscious decision?
It just felt like a natural evolution, although I did have an experience at a Band of Outsiders show that made me sit up and question things. I was seated next to Anna Wintour, the lights went down for the show to begin, and *The End* by The Doors started playing… and I just felt *bored*! And when I looked around me everyone else looked bored. I remember thinking to myself, 'Hold on, this really isn't what had excited me about fashion to begin with'. I probably came across as ungrateful, but it's important to be transparent about aspects of these very inaccessible worlds that are unfulfilling or unattractive.

You'd become jaded!
Well, while I hadn't much liked middle school, I really enjoyed high school. I felt very precious about the experience of just wandering around the suburbs, or having a crush on a boy, or sneaking out with my friends. It felt good to do that stuff because I had seen this other side – fashion shows and parties – and it had left me craving my own life.

One thing I'm struck by is the fact that you could probably have pursued the fashion route, successfully emulating say, a stylist or editor a generation or two older than you, and playing out that lifestyle you'd been exposed to. Or you could have continued Style Rookie, and amplified your profile and financial gain. But you chose not to.
The night when there was that first negative thing written about me, my dad handed me a short story called *Claudine's Book*. It's about a girl who keeps a journal that her stepmom finds and publishes. All of a sudden there are journalists at her door every day, asking

'I was seated next to Anna Wintour, the lights went down for the show to begin, and *The End* by The Doors started playing... and I just felt bored!'

her questions, trying to figure out if it was really Claudine who wrote the journal, but the stepmom takes credit for it. Claudine is happy to let them believe that and marches up to her tree house whistling a kind of victory march. I'm really glad that my dad showed that to me because I think we're conditioned to believe that the ultimate reward is recognition. But it's important to know that recognition doesn't necessarily mean understanding. Because I didn't really just want to be heard, I wanted to be understood.

Do you feel that your life now is one that is better understood?
Well, I met this girl yesterday who came up to me and said she was a Rookie reader; she was telling me about an essay that she'd written called *Reinventions of Love* and it was apparent that we shared similar touchstones of movies and books. I can't believe I get to meet someone on the street and we already have this established language through the works of art that have resonated with us. I have friends who have insane amounts of fame and the people who approach them are either like, 'You're a celebrity!' or they genuinely love their work, but they don't have any way of knowing, unless they were to talk to them for a long time. So I think the nice thing about writing is that someone has to read your work to know who you are.

Talking of celebrity culture, it's intriguing to me that mainstream magazines commission you to interview pop-culture celebrities, like Taylor Swift and Miley Cyrus. It's almost like you're being sent as the rational voice of reason.
Well, it's certainly interesting to consider the argument for and against recognition. Miley is going through this transition, and to her there is no difference between public and private. That is what I took away and ended up writing about. I asked her, 'Why not just do drugs in private or have sex instead of *performing* sex?' and she was like, 'There have been paparazzi outside my house since I was 14. I don't even feel like me, like when I see a picture of me, it's not me'. I can't imagine that level of… I don't even know what 'it' is.

Sounds terrifying.
I summarized that Miley piece by saying: we have created this person where there is no line between public and private; she is going through this in her own way. Young people who I talked to at Miley's concerts seem very inspired by her. It was almost like the level of compassion that people had for Katie Holmes breaking out of Scientology; for Miley to go against everything she had represented as a Disney star, it felt very symbolic for these kids.

What are your thoughts on teenage rebellion?
When I interviewed Taylor Swift for *Elle*, earlier this year, I asked her, 'You might not have had Disney or Nickelodeon to rebel against, but did you ever feel the need to rebel against yourself?' And she said, 'I have no interest in burning down the house that I have built; I can redecorate it but I am really proud of everything that I've done. Even the things that now embarrass me have led to everything else'. And that just makes so much sense to me.

So let's talk about Rookie. Would you agree that the outsider-ness of your middle-school years, and perhaps that sense of introversion or at least awkwardness, inform a lot of the site's editorial voice?
Yes, I find that I frequently end up talking about or referencing it, not because I feel a responsibility or that it is my duty, but just because it is an inevitable part of life for me; I don't know how not to talk about it and I don't have any shame about it. I feel like Rookie is such a supportive community – from the contributors to the girls who read it – so it's never felt embarrassing to talk about.

It feels extremely inclusive.
I am so happy that you get that vibe from it, because I sometimes worry about the tone; I love the things that I love and I want people to know about them and love things as well, but I worry that it can also seem like welcome to the cool kids' club…

How do you reconcile the fact that Rookie positions itself as this very inclusive platform for girls to connect and express themselves when your own life – being on stage in New York, dabbling in Hollywood – could now be perceived by Rookie's readers as detached, no longer relatable to them, aloof even?
I'm writing something at the moment about recently moving to New York and getting to have the experiences I'm having. I knew right away it wouldn't be a Rookie piece, not that I feel I have to censor myself or make myself more relatable or anything, but I think it would be in poor taste. When you were talking before about success, it made me think of a conversation I was having the other day with my friend. We were discussing when Jon Hamm said that thing about Kim Kardashian: 'I'm not a Kardashian, I'm an actor! I didn't ask to be photographed by paparazzi!' And my friend was saying, 'He's not wrong, he just sounds like an asshole'.

'I asked Miley, Why not do drugs in private or have sex instead of *performing* sex? and she said, There've been paps outside my house since I was 14.'

Are you uncomfortable with how Rookie's readers might think you're preaching from an ivory tower?
First of all, Rookie is not my personal blog and there are plenty of girls reading it who don't know I'm the editor, or don't know me full stop. I am in a position where I can promote it, and maybe there are people who come for me but then stay for all these other voices. The girls reading it are still in high school, and when I was in high school, adult figures in my life would constantly tell me, 'Don't worry, you are going to get out of school and you are going to go to college and you will go live in New York, you'll be fine, it *does* get better!' Even though they are right you still feel like shouting, 'Fuck you, I'm in so much pain!'

And now you feel like you've become that adult figure.
Well, there are some people who respond to that and are like, 'This inspires me; it makes me feel like I should express myself and get to do what I want and move to New York and all these other things'. And then there are those people for whom it does just feel like, 'Fuck you!'

Do you think the Rookie community is a tangible demographic or rather a disparate group of individuals?
I feel like earlier on it was a little niche: at that time there was more of a dividing line between mainstream and alternative culture, which has since been blurred – and I think Rookie can take some credit for that. I mean, we have heard from girls who've said Rookie used to be more punk and I feel like I never wanted it to be punk. I never wanted it to be a 'zine. Counter-culture comes out of people feeling excluded from mainstream culture, but what if we could change the mainstream culture instead? I was just at a Taylor Swift concert and I was so happy at the number of girls coming up to me and saying that they read Rookie – I don't think those girls are into Riot grrrl[7].

People presumably refer to you as the voice of a generation. How does that make you feel?
I never wanted to speak for teenage girls; I wanted to have my voice and create a space where other people could have their voices. I never wanted Rookie to be just giving answers, but giving options and perspectives; I didn't want us to dictate. I think it can be weak editorially if you include everything – just go figure it out!

How many people look at Rookie, give me some stats so I can get an idea of its scale and resonance.
Month to month there are 3 million hits.

Do you have organizations or brands that approach you thinking, 'Because of her relationship with Rookie's sizeable community, Tavi is worth aligning ourselves with?'
There are brands and companies that are certainly interested in the loyalty our readers have with us. But I feel like people would have better luck saving their money and looking at people's Twitter and Instagram accounts.

What I found so laughably out-of-step about The Sartorialist's dismissive comments regarding you[8] is that brands seem keener than ever before to tap into the voice of the youth market – essentially because it holds the keys to the next generation of consumers.
Yes, it was out of step, but he doesn't seem interested in the future; he's part of a group of people who want fashion to remain elitist, as if the values held by keeping it that way are in some way innovative, artistic or interesting. The irony is that he wants it both ways: the street-style photography, democratic blogger guy who's also in the ivory tower. I think the people who really know what's up – the ones who are going to keep their jobs – are the ones interested in young people.

Tell me about, for want of a better phrase, 'Brand Tavi'. Multinational companies such as Clinique are increasingly interested in you.
That is the one thing that's a bit tricky. I really value the fact that some people read Style Rookie for years and now

'There used to be more division between mainstream and alternative culture, which has since blurred. I think Rookie can take some credit for that.'

read Rookie, or have just recently started reading my work and are really supportive. I don't want to betray that, but I do have to make a living and I want freedom and I want choices. I'm thinking about something I posted on Instagram this morning about the Clinique campaign I did and someone said it was not 'Tavi-like'. And I was just like, 'Well I'm kind of the barometer for that'. But I think I can do these things and be completely transparent about them. It's not like I'm being forced into doing things that I don't feel comfortable with.

'I posted on Instagram about the Clinique campaign I did and someone said it wasn't Tavi-like. I was like, Well, I'm kind of the barometer for that one.'

You mentioned before that brands would be better off looking at social media than at Rookie in order to understand youth consumer behaviour. Do you find that images in a fashion magazine like *Vogue* have more or less cultural weight than those on Instagram feeds?
Probably less, based on the number of people seeing one versus the other – it depends on the feed. That has always existed: some things are influential through their popularity; others become more influential within a community of influencers. But I think it's goofy to try and uphold values that are elitist and classist, and that is why it bothered me when people were up in arms about seeing Kim and Kanye on the cover of *Vogue*. I'm not saying there aren't certain things about the Kardashian brand that make me uncomfortable, but I also think those are the things people love and perpetuate every time they talk about how much they hate her. That's why Kim is amazing: she has permeated this space that she wasn't ever supposed to: she is really rich, but it's not a wealth people in positions of power are comfortable with, because it's not old money.

What do you think she represents?
Well, her demographic is thought of as trashy, lowbrow and mainstream. But anyone mad about her being on the cover of *Vogue* is missing the point: *Vogue* is about trendiness, so it makes perfect sense, and she is one of the most powerful and relevant people in the world. I was talking to someone who was going to the Met Ball and – referring to Kim – she said, 'I feel now they just invite *everyone*!' And I was like, 'Yes, but who were they inviting before?' This is not a meritocracy, and I don't say that to invalidate anyone's hard work, but in the same way I work really hard there has also been a lot of right-time-right-place luck involved. That is true of everyone and our culture has largely been one that creates more of a time and place for some people than others, for people who are already privileged or from old money or are conventionally beautiful and skinny and white. And I think that even if people don't explicitly express why it makes them feel weird to see Kim Kardashian on the cover of *Vogue*, it's definitely there. I don't think there is any point in denying that we have been influenced by those systems in the world.

Do people who voice an opinion against that have a problem with the blurring of high-end and mass culture?
That is part of it. I understand the discomfort that people feel if they think Kim represents an unhealthy ideal of beauty, but it's not like *Vogue* doesn't do that, too! If anything, Kim diversifies the beauty standard. The idea that an interracial couple is the most powerful and glamorous in the world is great I think.

Do you think people are sceptical about how they've achieved that power and wealth?
When it comes to questioning the way Kim, or other celebrities of her ilk, make their money or promote themselves, I'm just not interested in being mad about that. I'm not interested in telling other women what to do. I'm not interested in creating a hierarchy about what is the most dignified way to be public because, as we have established, there are gross people in every industry and medium.

What is the general perception within the Rookie community regarding Kim and Kanye?
It's a combination of a lot of things: we have readers who say, 'I don't love the way that Kanye talks about women'. Or they don't like the way Kim perpetuates certain beauty standards. I'm just glad that they can have those opinions and that it is up for discussion and they can learn from one other. The conversation about Kim and Kanye played out on Facebook among our Rookie contributors, like Julianne Escobedo Shepherd, and I feel like I've just borrowed a lot of those thoughts in what I've just been telling you.

Besides Kim and Kanye, what are the liveliest debates that have taken place on Rookie's comments section?
The Rookie comments section is probably the most civil and loving place on the Internet! We once had a girl write in about needing to get an abortion, and I don't think abortion has ever been discussed on the Internet with so much respectful disagreeing and compassion. Of course, girls felt differently about it, but I was just so happy that it could unfold in such a thoughtful way.

It seems like you've brought together a rational community of voices. Which on the Internet is rare.
For my dad growing up – I don't know why I keep using him as an example, but he is 64 – the Oscars told you what was good, but now everyone is like, 'Nah, the Oscars basically represents 97 percent old white guys in an academy'. You don't have to listen to those authorities if you don't want to: there are other voices; there are people who look like you, and whose life experience is closer to yours. Maybe listen to them once in a while. [Pauses] Did that come across as a rant? It wasn't supposed to!

1. Tavi was born in Chicago but grew up in Oak Park, a suburban town in Illinois.

2. Before Danny Elfman ever wrote the theme tune to *The Simpsons* and began collaborating with Tim Burton, he had moved to Paris; joined and toured with French musical-theatre company, Le Grand Magic Circus; visited Ghana, Mali and Upper Volta (now Burkino Faso); and caught, and recovered from, malaria.

3. *Style Deficit Disorder: Harajuku Street Fashion* by Tiffany Godoy (Chronicle Books, 2007)

4. In 2014, artist, author, actor, screenwriter and film director Miranda July added app developer to her résumé. Somebody, an iOS app, allows people to send messages that are delivered verbally to their recipient by a stranger.

5. Born in 1899, Eddie Bauer opened his first outdoor-clothing store in 1926. In 1934 he was awarded US patent number 2025325 for the design of a badminton shuttlecock still used today, and 40 years later was named 'Retriever Breeder of the Year' by the US Professional Retriever Trainers Association. He died in 1986.

6. *On Keeping a Notebook* is included in *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*, Joan Didion's collection of essays first published in 1968.

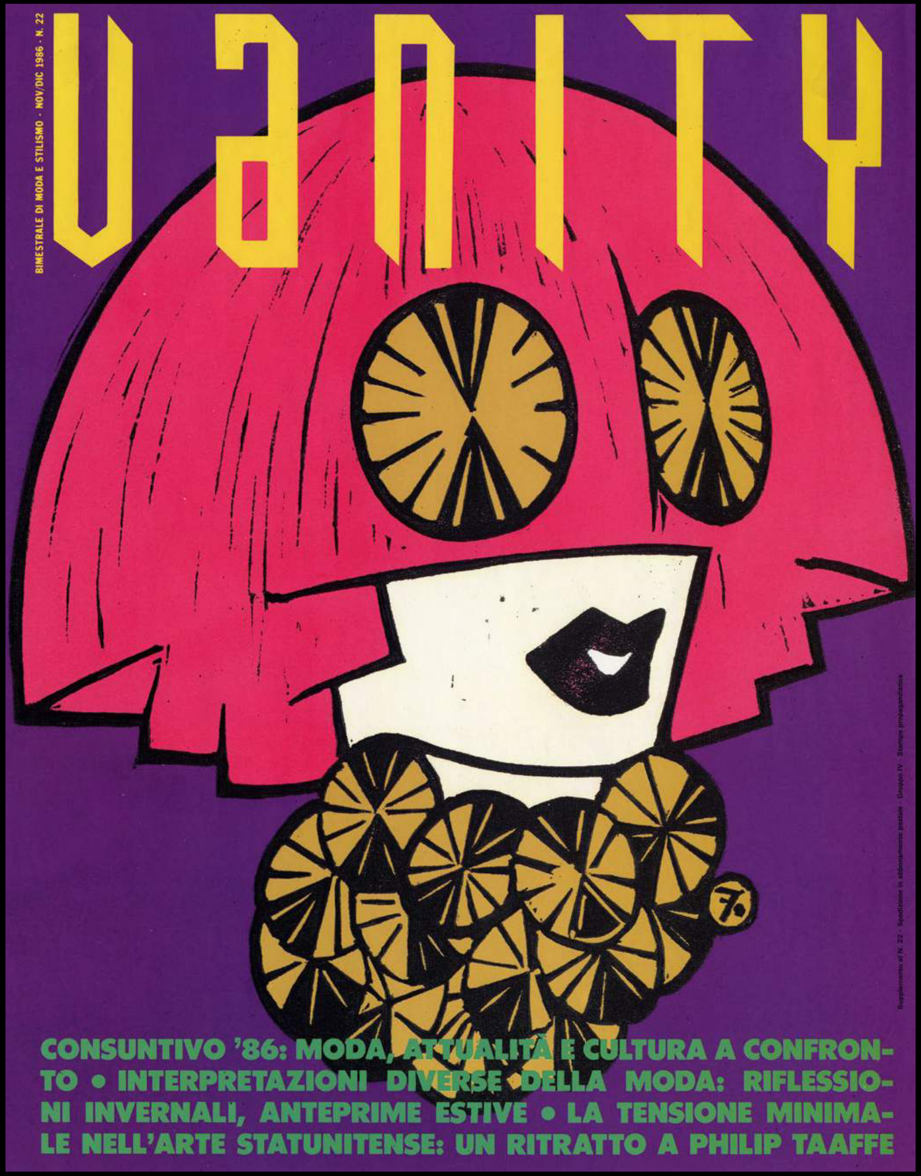
7. Riot grrrl is an underground feminist movement that came out the alternative- and punk-music scenes in the Pacific Northwest in the early 1990s. Bands identified with Riot grrrl include Heavens to Betsy, Bratmobile and Bikini Kill. The movement was also closely associated with a vibrant 'zine culture that sprang from its anti-consumer, DIY punk ethic.

8. In a 2011 interview with *The Talks*, The Sartorialist, aka, Scott Schuman, said, referring to Tavi's Style Rookie blog, 'It is like a five-year-old Michael Jackson singing about love – to him they are just words'.

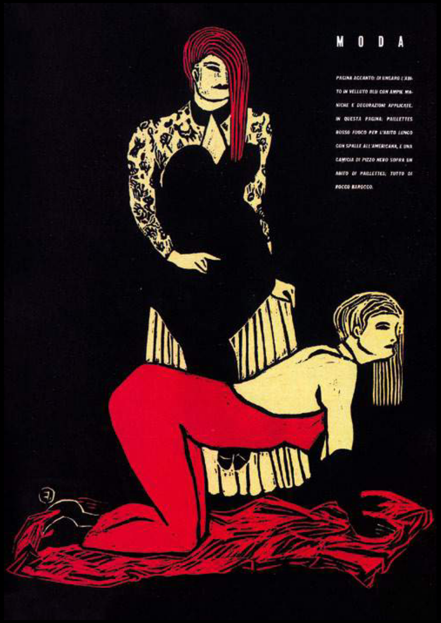
François Berthoud for *Vanity* magazine

Anna Piaggi's entirely illustrated magazine depicted the anything-goes spirit of 1980s Milan.

By Thomas Lenthal
Illustrations by François Berthoud

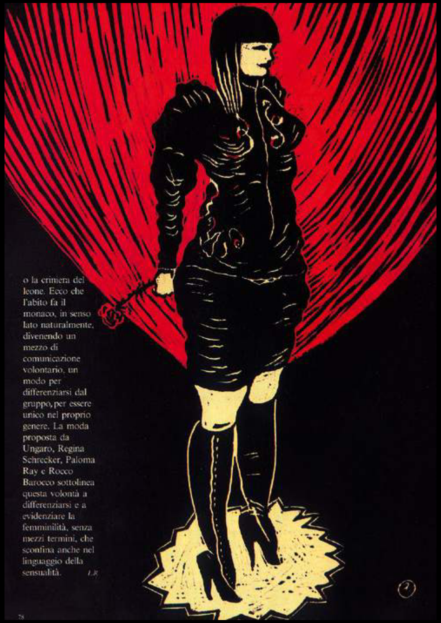

VANITY
BIMESTRALE DI MODA E STILISMO · NOV/DIC 1986 · N. 22
CONSUNTIVO '86: MODA, ATTUALITÀ E CULTURA A CONFRONTO • INTERPRETAZIONI DIVERSE DELLA MODA: RIFLESSIONI INVERNALI, ANTEPRIME ESTIVE • LA TENSIONE MINIMALE NELL'ARTE STATUNITENSE: UN RITRATTO A PHILIP TAAFFE
Supplemento al N. 22 · Spedizione in abbonamento postale · Gruppo IV · Stampa propagandistica

© François Berthoud/Courtesy of Condé Nast



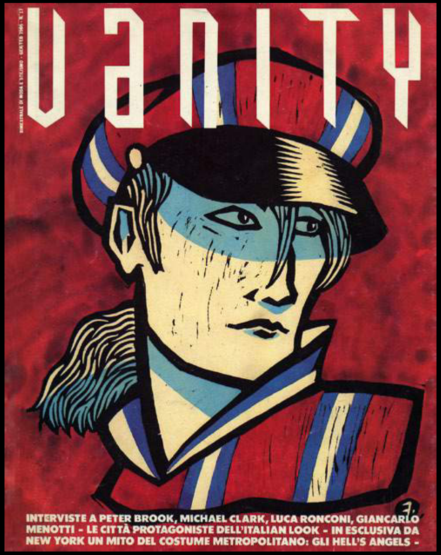
MODA

PAGINA ACCANTO: DI UNGARO L'ABITO IN VELLUTO BLU CON AMPIE MANICHE E DECORAZIONI APPLICATE. IN QUESTA PAGINA: PAILLETTES ROSSO FUOCO PER L'ABITO LUNGO CON SPALLE ALL'AMERICANA, E UNA CAMICIA DI PIZZO NERO SOPRA UN ABITO DI PAILLETTES; TUTTO DI ROCCO BAROCCO.

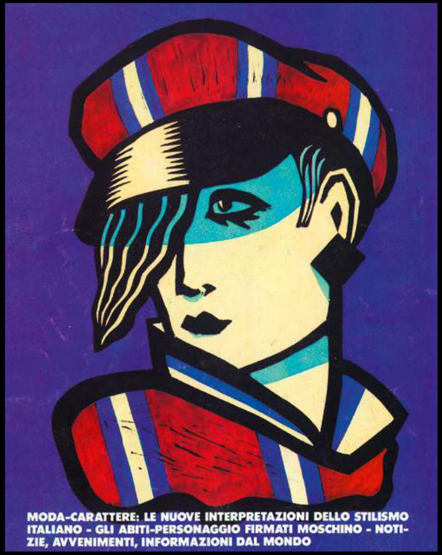


o la crimiera del leone. Ecco che l'abito fa il monaco, in senso lato naturalmente, divenendo un mezzo di comunicazione volontario, un modo per differenziarsi dal gruppo, per essere unico nel proprio genere. La moda proposta da Ungaro, Regina Schrecker, Paloma Ray e Rocco Barocco sottolinea questa volontà a differenziarsi e a evidenziare la femminilità, senza mezzi termini, che sconfina anche nel linguaggio della sensualità. *L.R.*

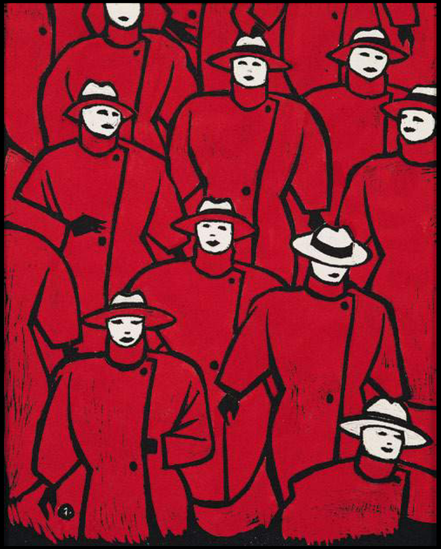
78

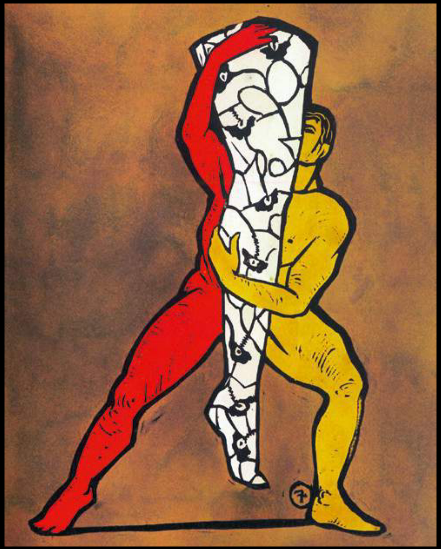


INTERVISTE A PETER BROOK, MICHAEL CLARK, LUCA RONCONI, GIANCARLO MENOTTI - LE CITTÀ PROTAGONISTE DELL'ITALIAN LOOK - IN ESCLUSIVA DA NEW YORK UN MITO DEL COSTUME METROPOLITANO: GLI HELL'S ANGELS -

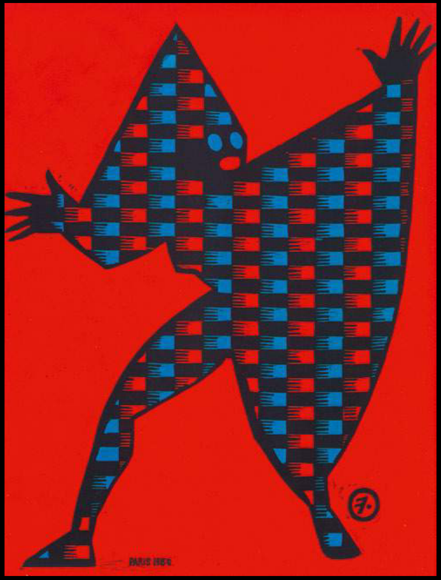


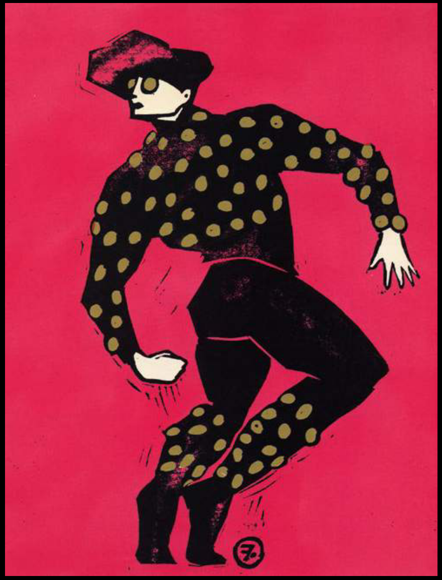
MODA-CARATTERE: LE NUOVE INTERPRETAZIONI DELLO STILISMO ITALIANO - GLI ABITI-PERSONAGGIO FIRMATI MOSCHINO - NOTIZIE, AVVENIMENTI, INFORMAZIONI DAL MONDO

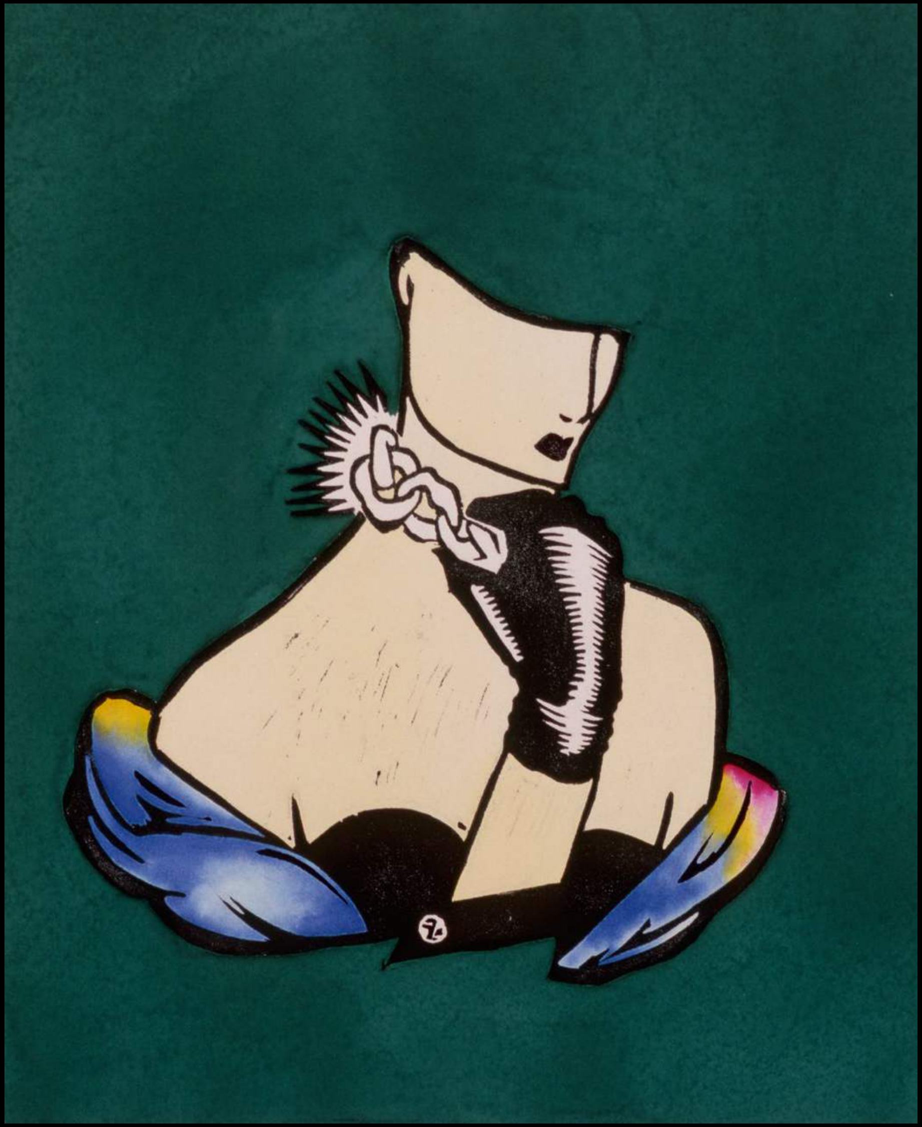




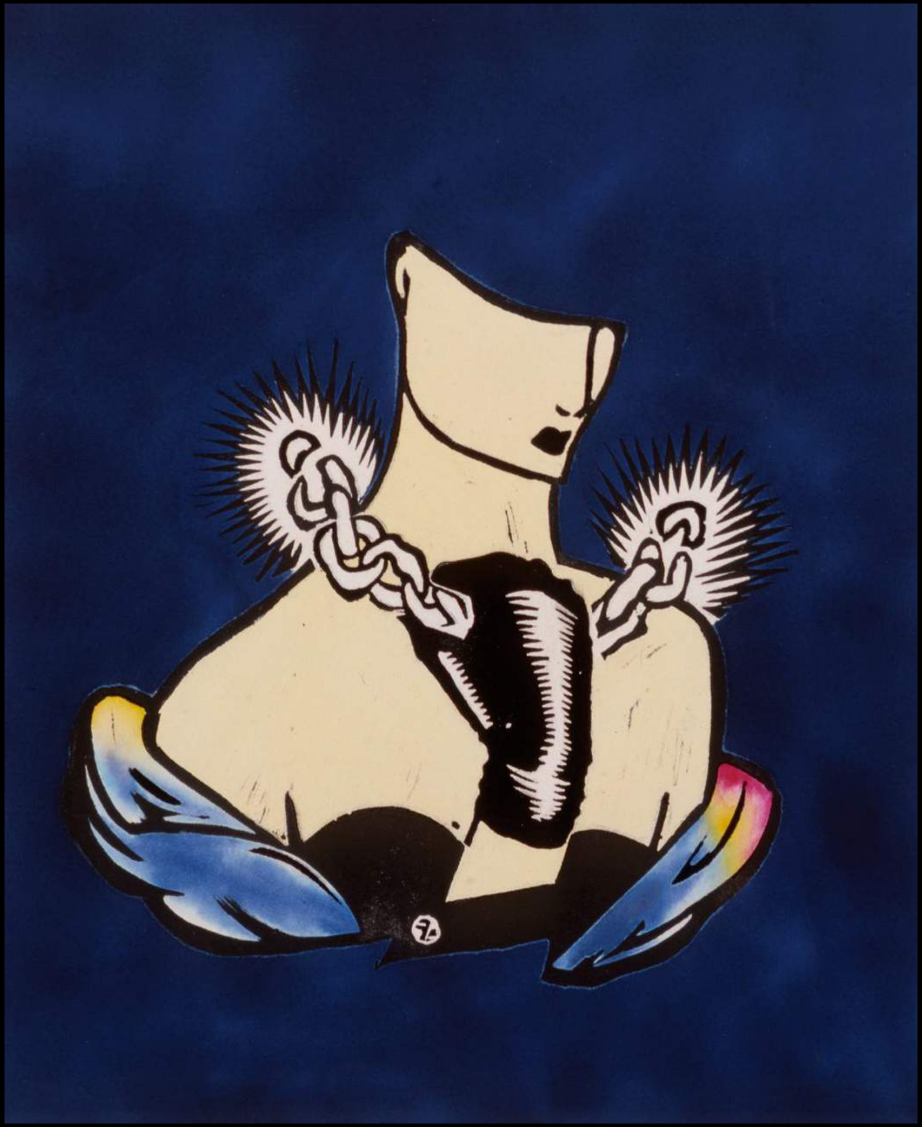
© François Berthoud/Courtesy of Condé Nast

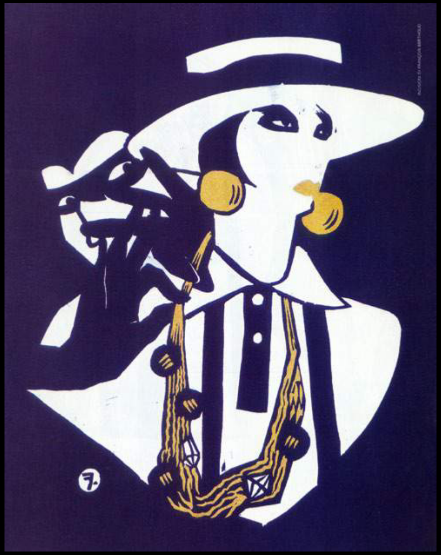


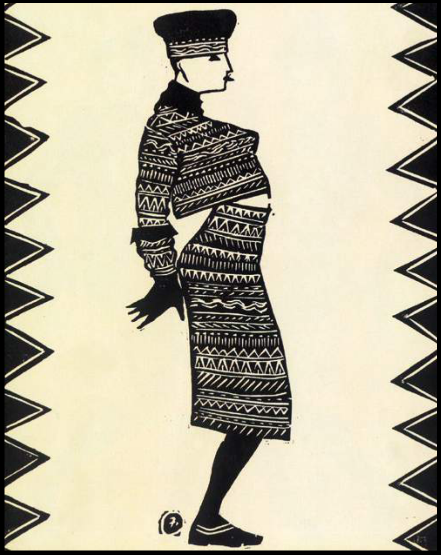


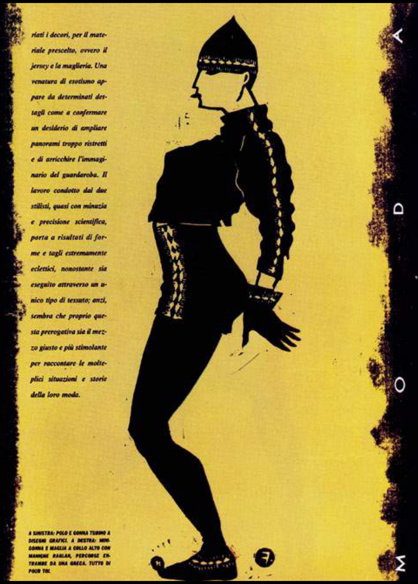


© François Berthoud/Courtesy of Condé Nast



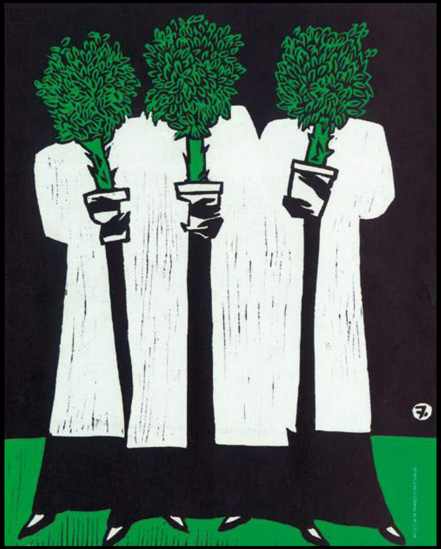




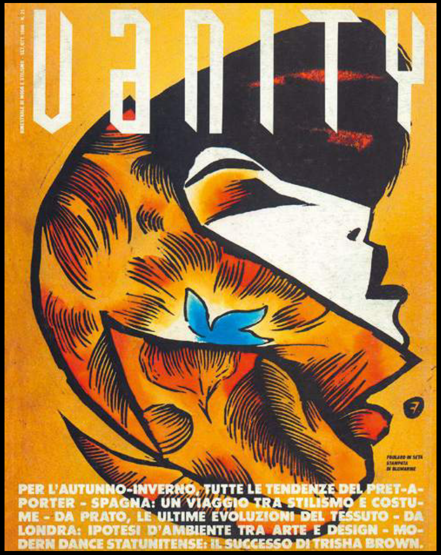


riati i decori, per il materiale prescelto, ovvero il jersey e la maglieria. Una venatura di esotismo appare da determinati dettagli come a confermare un desiderio di ampliare panorami troppo ristretti e di arricchire l'immaginario del guardaroba. Il lavoro condotto dai due stilisti, quasi con minuzia e precisione scientifica, porta a risultati di forme e tagli estremamente eclettici, nonostante sia eseguito attraverso un unico tipo di tessuto; anzi, sembra che proprio questa prerogativa sia il mezzo giusto e più stimolante per raccontare le molteplici situazioni e storie della loro moda.

A SINISTRA: POLO E GONNA TUBINO A DISEGNI GRAFICI. A DESTRA: MINIGONNA E MAGLIA A COLLO ALTO CON MANICHE RAGLAN, PERCORSE ENTRAMBE DA UNA GRECA. TUTTO DI POUR TOI.

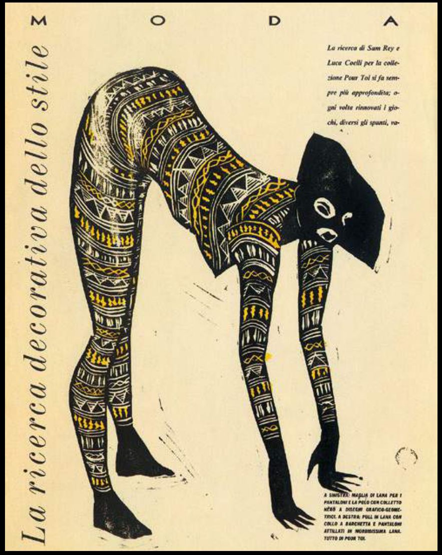


© François Berthoud/Courtesy of Condé Nast



FOULARD DI SETA STAMPATA DI BLUMARINE

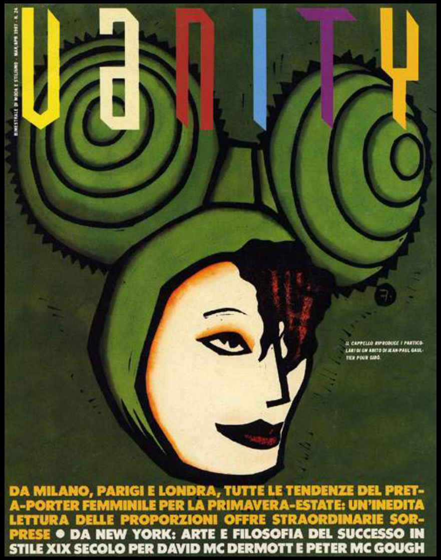
PER L'AUTUNNO-INVERNO, TUTTE LE TENDENZE DEL PRET-A-PORTER - SPAGNA: UN VIAGGIO TRA STILISMO E COSTUME - DA PRATO, LE ULTIME EVOLUZIONI DEL TESSUTO - DA LONDRA: IPOTESI D'AMBIENTE TRA ARTE E DESIGN - MODERN DANCE STATUNITENSE: IL SUCCESSO DI TRISHA BROWN.



La ricerca decorativa dello stile

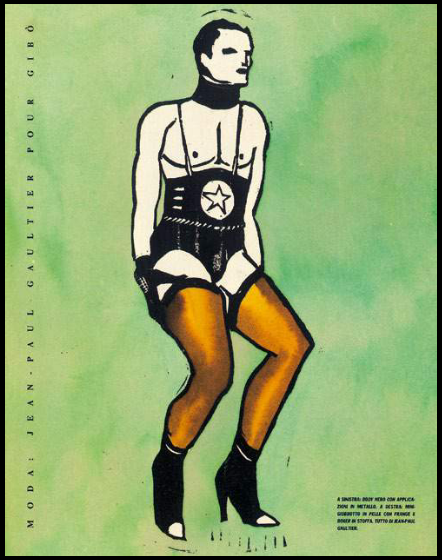
La ricerca di Sam Rey e Luca Coelli per la collezione Pour Toi si fa sempre più approfondita; ogni volta rinnovati i giochi, diversi gli spunti, va-

A SINISTRA: MAGLIA DI LANA PER I PANTALONI E LA POLO CON COLLETTO NERO A DISEGNI GRAFICO-GEOMETRICI. A DESTRA: PULL IN LANA CON COLLO A BARCHETTA E PANTALONI ATTILLATI IN MORBIDISSIMA LANA. TUTTO DI POUR TOI.



IL CAPPELLO RIPRODUCE I PARTICOLARI DI UN ABITO DI JEAN-PAUL GAULTIER POUR GIBÒ.

DA MILANO, PARIGI E LONDRA, TUTTE LE TENDENZE DEL PRET-A-PORTER FEMMINILE PER LA PRIMAVERA-ESTATE: UN'INEDITA LETTURA DELLE PROPORZIONI OFFRE STRAORDINARIE SORPRESE ● DA NEW YORK: ARTE E FILOSOFIA DEL SUCCESSO IN STILE XIX SECOLO PER DAVID MC DERMOTT E PETER MC GOUGH



MODA: JEAN-PAUL GAULTIER POUR GIBÒ

A SINISTRA: BODY NERO CON APPLICAZIONI IN METALLO. A DESTRA: MINIGIUBBOTTO IN PELLE CON FRANGE E BOXER IN STOFFA. TUTTO DI JEAN-PAUL GAULTIER.

Anna Piaggi's magazine *Vanity*, which emerged in the 1980s, was a unique moment not just in François Berthoud's life, but also in the history of fashion. For Berthoud, the Swiss artist, who had moved to Milan after his studies, it was the first place that his striking, erotically charged illustrations were seen by the fashion cognoscenti. For the industry it was an emblem of the enormous changes it was undergoing: a time when a new generation of designers brought their raw talent, creative desire and couture-like approach to ready-to-wear, and then added a radical dose of street smarts. Paris was shaken up by designers like Claude Montana, Thierry Mugler and Jean Paul Gaultier, as well as by Japanese imports, Yohji Yamamoto and Issey Miyake. Milan was treated to Romeo Gigli, Franco Moschino and the effervescence of Fiorucci. And observing it all was Anna Piaggi, an already legendary figure, muse for creative people of all types, and the embodiment of fashion's newfound spirit.

> ‘Armani, Moschino, Fiorucci… the whole system of Italian fashion emerged and developed during the years that Anna Piaggi was editing *Vanity*.’

She founded *Vanity* in 1981. Entirely illustrated, at the beginning by a single artist, it instantaneously resurrected fashion illustration, bringing back from the dead a genre whose *raison d'être* had been eclipsed by photography. The magazine was also a showcase for Anna Piaggi's vision of what fashion could be – forward-looking yet anachronistic, popular yet anti-commercial, individual yet part of a movement – illustrated by the particular talent of a group of young artists that included Antonio Lopez and François Berthoud.

Vanity survived the death of Lopez, one of its key contributors, aged 44, but was eventually shuttered in the mid-80s when, says Berthoud, ‘[Publishers] Condé Nast lost interest in the project’. Anna Piaggi continued working with the company, her celebrated *doppie paggine* in *Vogue Italia* making her a constant and vital presence until her death aged 80 in 2012. ‘She had a great understanding of and passion for fashion,’ says Berthoud, who now lives in Zurich, ‘and she could write really well. She was truly unique.’

François, when did you learn your craft as an illustrator?

François: As a kid, I just drew all of the time. I did a foundation year at an art school in La Chaux-de-Fonds[1], Switzerland, and learned the basics of drawing, sculpture, colour theory. It was the kind of place where you could also study jewellery or engraving the movements of watches – which was the industry in that area – but I wanted to study graphic design, to make images that were in the streets, which could be visible all around. That was my aim. I was 17 and things were very different then; the industry was much smaller and people didn't really know that imagery would explode the way it has today, that there would be this proliferation of photography and printed images.

After your studies, what prompted your move from Switzerland to Milan? What made Milan the right city to begin your career at that moment in time?

Firstly, I could speak the language because my mother is Italian. At the time, the choices were Paris or not Paris! Paris felt like more of an obvious choice, but I had this feeling that Milan could be different and interesting. I also had the chance to meet the people at Condé Nast through friends and got a job in Milan.

Laying out pages?

Yes, as a graphic designer.

For what magazine?

We were doing *Vogue Pelle*, *Vogue Sposa* and *Vogue Bambini*. My boss was Carla Sozzani[2]. I was 22 – this was right after school in 1982.

So Milan wasn't the master plan but rather an opportunity to get out of Switzerland?

Exactly, escape! But I was definitely interested in fashion. And as I mentioned, I was drawing all the time and doing illustrations. By the time I had completed my studies, I was getting confident with my own style – it had taken time to focus on what would make my drawings recognizable and unique.

Did you know you wanted to eventually venture into illustration and away from graphic design or did you see yourself becoming an art director?

I actually became the art director of *Vogue Sposa*! The good thing was that I was qualified to do many different things – graphic design, typography and photography. At *Vogue Bambini*, they would ask for illustrations and I would do those, too. People liked me because I could do things. However, I was definitely more interested in painting and illustration than in becoming an art director.

Could you describe the fashion landscape, specifically in Milan, in the 1980s?

It was the beginning of everything. Milan was starting to become what it is now. Armani and Moschino were already there. I remember seeing the second Moschino show, which was quite provocative and over the top. Then Versace came along. The whole system of Italian fashion emerged and developed during those years – not only the brands and designers but the advertising, the publicity, the ideas of how to show and promote products. The entire system was being built day by day.

So essentially when you arrived in Milan, you had no idea that it was starting to become the place to be.

It was a total coincidence. I don't think anybody there even knew that then. There was this demand for people who could do things. When people needed stylists for magazines then, there weren't people who had any professional training for that, so they would just hire girls who dressed nicely and had a mother with some couture dresses in her closet. That was the best reference you could have to become a stylist at Condé Nast. That was how it was. Later, I had an apartment in Paris, in Rue des Archives, and I spent some time there but I was attracted back to Milan because it was more dynamic – I was constantly working and getting involved in projects there. I was at Fiorucci's store[3] before he became a world phenomenon; Madonna was singing at Plastic[4], she was unknown then – so it was a really exciting place to be.

> ‘We were all trying to work out how to tell fashion stories through non-photographic images and communicate about fashion in a different way.’

What was your rapport with the kind of fashion illustration that had come directly before you?

My cultural references came more from comic strips. That was my thing. In fact, I immediately began doing comics that were published in Italy while I was working at Condé Nast.

What kind of comics were you doing?

It's hard to explain. There was one magazine called *Alter*[5] in Milan. The content was really varied, and really, really funny. At the time, there was a strong group of illustrators there. Comic artists in Italy were either published in *Alter* or in *Frigidaire*[6] in Rome. It was very experimental; it had nothing to do with the [comic-book] movements in Belgium or France and was rather more influenced by American comic artists. When I started to work at *Vanity*, I didn't know exactly what fashion illustration was – besides of course knowing about the work of René Gruau[7] and Antonio Lopez[8].

Tell me about *Vanity*. How and why was it launched?

Vanity was created by Anna Piaggi and was devoted to new and emerging Italian fashion. The entire concept of the magazine was that it was illustrated entirely from start to finish by Antonio Lopez. He did four or five, maybe even six issues. He was amazingly talented and capable of expressing the fashion of the moment.

Anna Piaggi was enthusiastic about things and helped people. So she would talk enthusiastically about this person, about this young designer, this special collection, and you would listen to her and her opinion would somehow convince others, too. I think her credibility and creativity in terms of both how to present and communicate fashion were certainly highly considered at the time.

So before having an official outlet or role, she was an opinion maker, someone who was socially active, who people were interested in and who had a point of view?

Yes. She had a very good relationship with creative people because she could understand what they were doing, and she loved them and helped give them visibility. She was not the kind of person that you thought would become the editor in chief of a magazine. She was a free spirit rather than a manager.

So how did you meet her and start working on *Vanity*?

I had met her a couple of times before, here and there, so we knew each other. When Antonio Lopez could no longer work because he became ill, they decided to continue the project – even though the magazine was so connected to him. They were looking for new contributors and they picked up on my work and a group of other comic artists – I suppose they felt we were capable of drawing, creating interesting images and that we were hip and young. They called us all in for a big meeting at Condé Nast. I knew some of the others, most of them were living in Bologna or Rome, not Milan. Lorenzo Mattotti was in Milan, so I knew him. Suddenly there was this group of crazy kids in their 20s – I was 25 or 26 – in Condé Nast's offices.

So you worked on all the issues after Antonio's departure from the magazine to the end?
Yes. I did many of the covers, too – around seven. Mattotti also did the covers for a period – they had this idea of having one illustrator do a series of covers. Mattotti knew nothing about fashion and was not interested in it, but he is such a good draftsman that he could do anything at all, and he is fast. He was a real maestro. He did lots and lots of pages. We were all working like slaves and being paid 200,000 lire a page.

That's around €100 a page. That was quite some money in the 1980s, did you live off it?
Yes, that and some other things. I also did advertising – some of it was illustrated in-house.

> ‘We could do virtually anything we wanted: I placed the Gaultier bra on the head of a girl to make Mickey Mouse ears – no one said a thing.’

What were the first illustrations that Anna Piaggi commissioned from you?
For the first issue they asked each one of us to do between three to six pages – we all had very different styles and approaches. Most of the other contributors didn't have any interest or experience in fashion. I was probably the one most connected to the fashion world because I had already worked on magazines and had learned a lot very quickly under Carla Sozzani. For me it was interesting because I could mix fashion, which I liked, with drawing and illustration; it was the perfect cocktail.

How was it working with Piaggi?
Very easy. She was always happy. She always had intelligent insights and could open your eyes to things. There was also an art director, Alberto Nodolini, who was also the art director of *Vogue* at the time. He was what you'd call a real art director: he would call us to his desk and spend a lot of time communicating with us.

Would they give you pictures of the collections as starting points?
Yes, and slides. I would also go to see the shows.

How many drawings would you produce for each issue?
In some issues I would do 30 pages and the cover, too. I was working day and night on it; I was totally stressed.

You are very fast though.
I am fast, but at the time I was using demanding techniques like woodcarving and linocutting – there was a lot of blood involved! And no possibility of retouching either.

Why did you use lino?
I could have definitely done something simpler for sure! I was looking for those really hard, sharp, black lines. I was using ink and markers on acetate, and then with a knife I would scratch it so I could have negative lines – very sharp in the blacks – and then I would make the edges even sharper. I thought, I'm engraving, so let's try and do the real thing and see what happens. And when I tried it, I was super excited because the result was beyond my expectations. It created effects I could not have imagined. It was powerful and in your face. Also, the colours with the ink, the combination was just right and it became a signature.

And that was something you established while at *Vanity*? Would you say it was where you developed your style?
Yes. It started from there and it evolved in a lot of other ways.

It is something you own, no one else does it.
Yes, basically. Just by chance from my bedroom! It was an incredible period really.

Looking at *Vanity* now, what do you think it says about its context, origin and fashion in general?
I think that the *Vanity* experience was one of a kind. For fashion people, as well as the art world and graphic designers, it has always been seen as exceptional. People often tell me that they have a collection of copies. It was a remarkable experience for all of those involved. We were all trying to work out how to tell fashion stories through non-photographic images and communicate about fashion in a different way. It was kind of crazy because we could do virtually anything that we wanted. There was an opera section at the end of each issue because the art director was an opera lover! When I was doing those covers, they would give me a dress to show, but I would do a head shot, a close-up, so in the end you saw nothing of the dress really. Some drawings didn't even really make sense. For instance, I placed the Gaultier bra on the head of a girl to make Mickey Mouse ears – and no one said a thing. I don't know if that's a reasonable way to present fashion in the long term. I don't know if those tricks could only have been pushed so far, but at the time it was perfectly fine and good fun. I am very sentimental about it because it was a great period. It was amazing, I could not have expected more than what happened in such a short space of time.

When it was happening, did you realize how exceptional the experience was?
No, but I was aware that this thing was a great opportunity, that I had access to a playground where I could really push myself and create the most fantastic things I could think of – it was the moment and the place to do it.

---

1. La Chaux-de-Fonds, a town in the canton of Neuchâtel, Switzerland, burned down in 1792. It was rebuilt using a rational grid system that mixed housing and factories to maximize the efficiency of workers at local watchmakers. Karl Marx analysed the town's system in *Das Kapital*, while its mix of industry and domesticity may have influenced Le Corbusier. The architect was born in the town in 1887.

2. Carla Sozzani was an editor at *Vogue Italia* in the 1970s and 1980s, before launching *Elle* in Italy in 1987. In 1990 she founded gallery and concept store 10 Corso Como in Milan which she continues to expand globally.

3. Elio Fiorucci's revolutionary store on Via Torino, Milan, opened in 1974. Spread over three floors, it had fountains, an ‘antique market’, a restaurant and a performance space.

4. Opened in 1980 at Viale Umbria 120, Plastic was considered Milan's answer to Studio 54. During the 1980s, it played host to stars including Prince, Madonna, Pink Floyd and Freddie Mercury. In 2012, Plastic closed its doors before relaunching at Via Gargano 15.

5. *Alter* was a left-wing comics magazine published in the 1970s and 1980s in Milan. It was the sister magazine to *linus*, the only Italian comics magazine aimed at adults when it first appeared in 1965.

6. In *Drawn and Dangerous: Italian Comics in the 1970s and 1980s*, Simone Castaldi states that from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, Italian comics such as *Frigidaire*, *Alter* and *linus*, ‘served as a neutral meeting ground, a vital link between popular art and the exponents of sanctioned cultural areas. Thanks to this unsuspected medium, painters, art critics and literary authors exchanged experiences with comic creators, lending and borrowing ideas and approaches’.

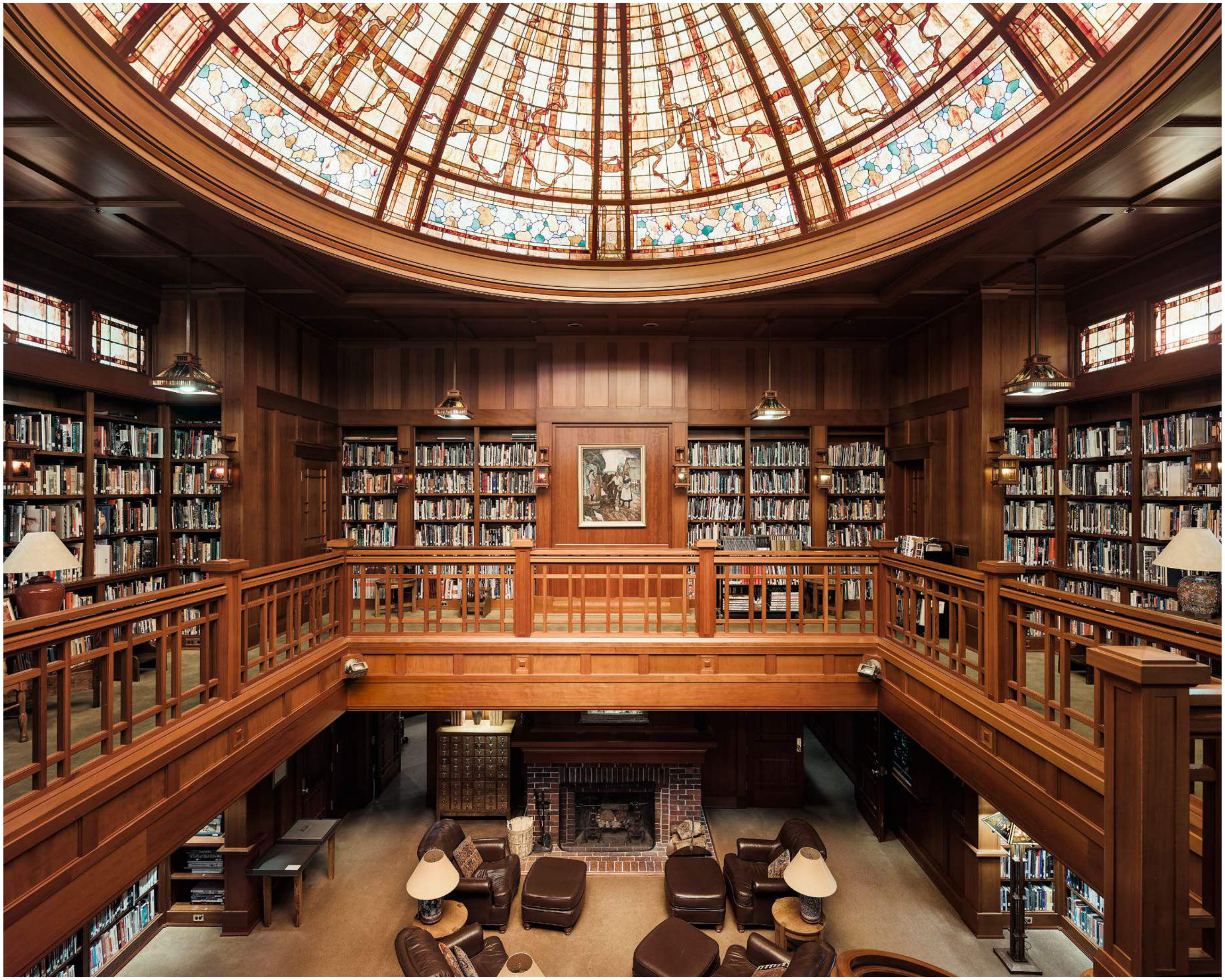
7. René Gruau was a celebrated Italian fashion illustrator. He was a friend of Christian Dior who created iconic advertising for Dior's perfumes from the early 1950s until the 1980s.

8. Antonio Lopez (1943-1987) was a much-loved Puerto Rican illustrator and photographer. In 1969 he moved to Paris where he discovered Jessica Lange, inspired Karl Lagerfeld and created illustrations for all of fashion's major publications. *Vanity* was created as a vehicle for his illustrations by Anna Piaggi.

‘There’s nothing like the substantial heft of a good book.’

The founder of IDEA Books on why print still matters to some of us.

By David Owen



George Lucas Collection
Lucas Research Library,
Skywalker Ranch, Northern California
Photographs: Joe Fletcher

EXIT

George Lucas

'There is something unequivocally special about reading and researching with physical books and libraries,' filmmaker George Lucas tells us via e-mail from Skywalker Ranch in northern California. 'It often allows a more in-depth look into materials that may have yet to be digitized or presented fully online. You can find information of a rarer nature and distinctive images that differ from the same top few Internet searches everyone else also sees. The Research Library and its trusted librarians have helped me research film, costumes, hair and makeup for years. On a more nostalgic note, there's nothing like the tangible nature of turning actual pages of paper, the smell of the print, the substantial heft of a good book.' That research library, an Arts and Crafts-style building with a skylit dome Lucas helped design, is managed by his trusted librarian Jo Donaldson, who gave us an insight into the galactic storyteller's reasons for accumulating so much paper-bound knowledge.

So tell me your role and job title.
Jo Donaldson: Manager of the Lucas Research Library.

How long have you been in that position?
I started in the library in 1984.

Wow!
I was hired as an assistant librarian. The six-month job turned into a 30-year career. Debbie Fine started the library for George back in the late 1970s. She needed an assistant and then when she retired several years later I took over as manager of the library.

Do you have people working for you?
Right now I have one research librarian and we do basically the same thing: provide research and reference searches to our company and to outside clients in the film and TV industry.

What are the origins of the collection?
Around 1978 George decided he wanted to have a full-time research library and librarian for productions – mainly story research, set, costumes and hair research for films that he was going to be working on.

And has it always been located here in northern California?
At that time George's company was based in L.A. He subsequently bought the property that was to become Skywalker Ranch. Although he'd lived in L.A. for a while, he really wanted to move to northern California. It's a rural setting. The ranch looks like a residence, but it was built for commercial use.

The library is a really beautiful building. Did George design it?
He is a frustrated architect, I think. He came up with all the designs and worked on them with the architects. The main house looks very Victorian in some rooms, but the library has an Arts and Crafts feel. And it is all natural light coming in the dome.

And it's vast.
We've been building our collections for over 30 years and along the way we have acquired two historical collections from movie studios. The old Universal Studios research library was acquired when it closed down in 2000 and the Paramount Studios research library, which had been dormant since the late 1960s, we acquired in 1987. Since our collection started in basically the late 1970s, these historical collections added to our resources a lot. It preserved these historical collections and kept them intact. George is always thinking about that, preserving these book collections.

There must be amazing books…
In the Paramount collection, if you look at the check-out card in the books you pull off the shelves, you'll see that Alfred Hitchcock took this book out in 1964; and Cecil B. DeMille checked another one in the 1940s. And of course, Edith Head[1], the costume designer, used the Paramount library a lot, so there are many books that have her signature on them, thanks to her work with Hitchcock. There's a book on British cooking that Cary Grant checked out.

This must really appeal to the people who use the library now…
It does. One of the downsides is that so many of our clients don't have time to actually come and browse the library. Most of the outside clients are in L.A. and they can't come and look at the collection, so we gather the information for them and send it off.

Is the collection predominantly visual?
We probably have 16,000 books in the Lucas Library collection and most of them are picture books. Years ago someone came to our library and he was looking at the books and he said, 'This is like the largest collection of coffee table books I've ever seen!' Of course, we do have other books because we do story research for our productions. For all the *Raiders*[2] movies we have a large mythology section. We just don't have any fiction in our library.

'If you look at the check-out card in the books you pull off the shelves, you'll see that Alfred Hitchcock took this one out in 1964.'

And is the library itself unique or do other companies still maintain them?
All the studios used to have research libraries like ours. These days there is Warner's that's still around, as well as the Fox research library. Disney has a couple of research libraries. What is unusual about ours is that it has continued to grow and expand and acquire material. A lot of these other libraries have had their budgets cut – probably back in the 1970s, the 1980s – which has obviously affected their growth.

Does it feel like you are working in the past?
Over the last couple of years we've noticed, because of the Internet and the historical images now available online, that our outside-client requests have decreased. So we are not working with outside clients as much as we used to.

How are you treating that within the library? Are you digitalizing things?
No, we are really not – there is so much. There are also amazing picture files, which are in 500 filing cabinets. They are organized by subject and they have stills that were taken of New York street scenes from the 1930s to 1950s. There are clippings from newspapers and an amazing periodical collection: *Harper's* magazine going back to the late 1900s, a whole run of *Life* magazines. That sort of material is so entirely different to what's available online.

Of course, if people don't have time to come in and browse the shelves then they are depending on us more to deliver what they want. There is not that, 'Oh, turn the page' and, 'Wow, look at that image, I didn't even know I wanted that image.' Or the chance to look at that book that is next to the book that you requested. It means that they are depending more on our take. Fortunately, after you've been working on *Star Wars* movies for 15 years, you kind of know what production designers are going to want to see; the terrain, the animals, what is going to inspire them…

I've been thinking lately how books compare to digital material – it could be generational. We have production designers who come in here and who are in their 50s and 60s and they just go wild for the books. They could stay here all day. But some of the younger artists – although they like books – are comfortable with getting images and references online.

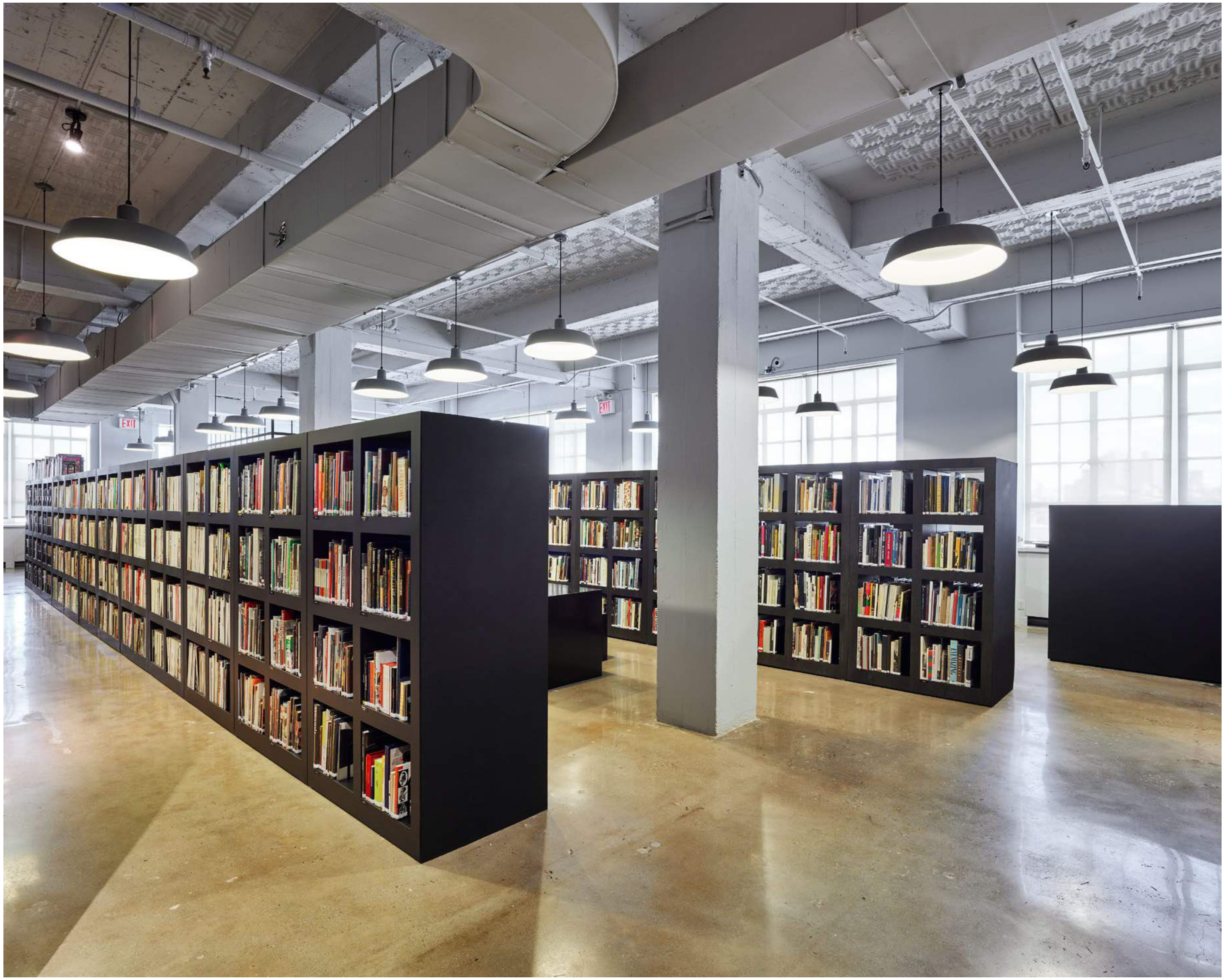
That said, there were younger artists working on the *Star Wars* prequels and their art department was actually in the same building as our library. Even though they were younger, they did love to have books by their computers. They were drawing on their computers, but they loved having the physical books there, too. They worked on all three episodes and the books would just stay up there. It wasn't unusual for an artist to have 20 books from our library by his or her computer. Some of the books they had checked out for about eight years!

'After you've been working on *Star Wars* movies for 15 years, you kind of know what books production designers are going to want to see.'

---

[1] Edith Head (1897-1981), perhaps Hollywood's most celebrated costume designer, got her first big break in 1933 on *She Done Him Wrong*, starring Mae West. By the time of her death she had worked on nearly 450 films, including 11 with Alfred Hitchcock, and won eight Academy Awards (no other woman has won more). More recently, she is said to have been the inspiration for the character of Edna Mode in the 2004 Pixar film, *The Incredibles*.

[2] George Lucas co-wrote the story and was an executive producer for *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981) and its three sequels.



Giovanni Bianco Collection
Studio65, Greenwich Village, New York City
Photographs: Nikolas Koenig

Giovanni Bianco

Biography or bibliography? Giovanni Bianco's life is made of books. Born in Brazil, he moved to Milan aged 23 where he met Gianni Versace and Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana, and began his career as an art director. After a childhood when books were an unaffordable luxury, Bianco used his earnings to begin building an impressive library, book by book. When he moved his business to New York, he built a studio in Manhattan that he designed around his book collection. The library is at the core of the man and his work. The 20 or so young designers working quietly away during our interview may have been looking at screens, but the business that employs them was built on print. Indeed, the books may well survive both Giovanni and his company. The narrative arc of the library is shaping up to be a perfect circle: he is planning to establish a foundation in Rio to house the books and bring culture to disadvantaged Brazilians, young people facing the same challenges he did not so long ago.

> ‘Thirty percent of my books, the contents are not incredible; but the binding and the paper and the packaging and the object are so beautiful to me.’

Do you remember the first book you bought?
Giovanni Bianco: Everything started when I was young. I come from a very simple family in Brazil. I started working with my father when I was five years old, selling fruit in the street markets. We were really poor. I would see books in a friend's house and in the library, but I didn't have any money. I studied arts when I was 21 – two years before I left for Milan – and I would think, ‘Oh my god, the first time I make money I promise I will go buy books!’ I was so frustrated. At that time there was no culture. Not like now with the Internet. We didn't have all that. In Rio, if you were studying you needed to have the object. My dream was to buy art books.

And that happened…
In my first year in Milan I started to have some money, so I bought my first book. It was on Picasso. I am not a really big fan of Picasso. I mean, I love him, but in art I really love Braque more. I don't know why I bought it, probably because it was really obvious – the first book I buy about art, I buy Picasso! And one of my first jobs in Milan – this is before I met Domenico and Stefano and started working in fashion – was with the Brazilian Consulate. I was hired for four hours a day to clean and catalogue their library because it was so disorganized. For me it was a gift to be touching and working with books every day.

When you say you were in love with books, was it ‘books’ or was it the content and the art inside them?
I think in the beginning it was about how I could get my hands on culture. How I could touch the information because I wanted more tools and instruments for my life. But it was also a love for the object. Today, probably 30 percent of my books, the contents are not incredible, but the binding and the paper are so beautiful. The packaging and the object are so important to me. Often my job, my profession, has been related to that: I made books, I designed books and my relationship with these objects changed a lot. I started to understand about the papers, the materials, the volumes, everything. The books are not just about the contents or what is happening inside but everything else: the smell, the colour, the object.

When you were young you wanted books to have access to culture, but now your young employees can see everything they want…
I think how lucky my guys are who come here and have everything that I didn't have, but the reality – the sad reality – is that I look and I never see anyone out of the 25 people working here, looking at the books! Maybe once every three weeks there is someone with a book! It's the saddest thing because Google and the Internet killed all that.

But they are designing for non-print, digital products.
Yes, I can understand because in the last years my clients no longer want a catalogue so much. We do it for Miu Miu. I think Miuccia Prada is the only client who still likes a catalogue and thank god for her. It's weird in a way how I still have my passion for books. My passion is huge, it's such a contradiction with the time. I thought that maybe over the years my passion would slow and that I would not buy so many books, but no way, it's the opposite! I respect the times, I love the Internet, but books are my love, my passion, my life.

Do you also have books at home that aren't in this studio library?
A lot! A lot! In my house in New York I have the books I really love. More art books and fewer working books, fewer fashion books. In São Paulo I have more on Brazilian culture. Of course I have books in my house; I need them there!

And is it important for you that other people in your life and your work know you have a lot of books?
It's for me and not for anybody else; it is not something I am doing to showcase. I am not like, ‘Come and see my collection of books!’

How do you respond to other people with great books? Do you warm to people who you know also buy lots of books and love books?
Yes, when I realize people have this love we exchange information, of course. I went to my friend's house and he had a billion beautiful books and I realized right there, I don't have this or that and it is so weird because in the arts and fashion I thought I had everything. I have bought a million books, and duplicates!

> ‘Books are the most important thing in my life. I'm starting work on a foundation in Brazil for the poor in Rio; I'll donate all my books to that when I die.’

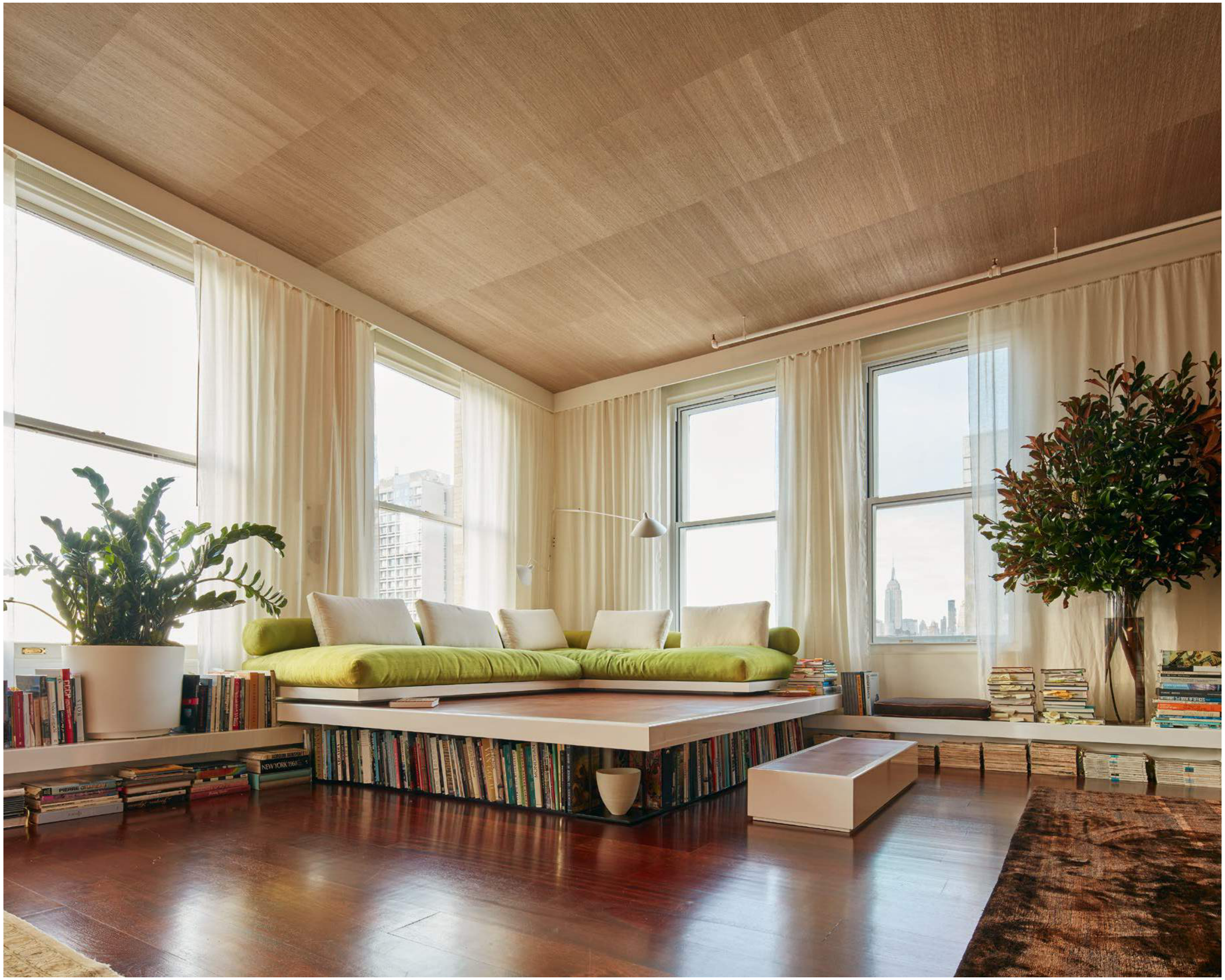
How many books do you have? Not a million, surely!
I don't know, 4,000 maybe, 6,000? I prefer not to know. I have some amazing books, some very important books and some very cheap books that I am very attached to. It's not just about expensive or rare books, but also books that relay some message to me. It is about love.

Did someone design your office space or did you design it?
I drew my first idea but my friend, who is a young Brazilian architect, he said I needed help. I needed a space where I could put all my books together. The most important thing is the library.

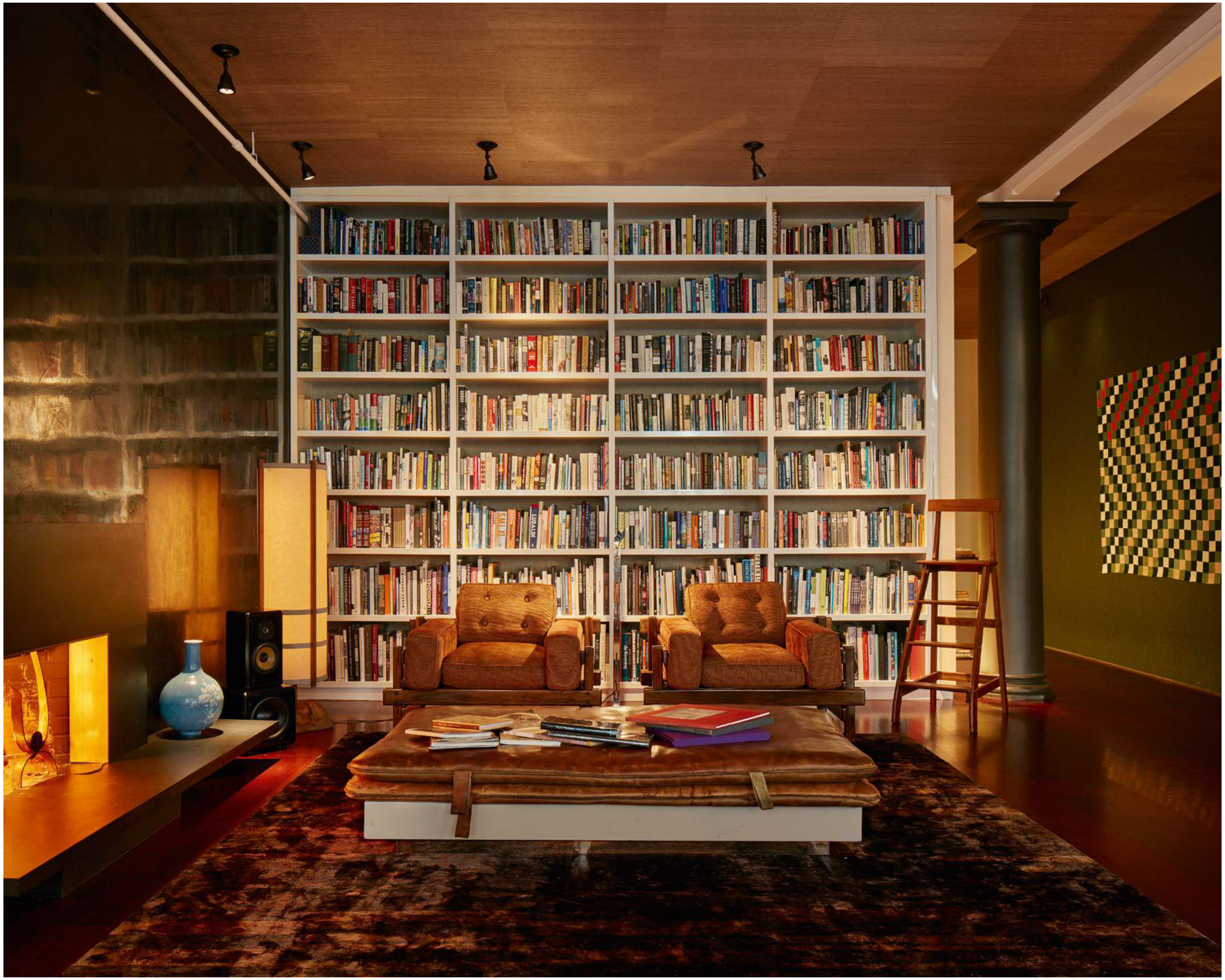
The books are the centre of everything.
The books are the most important thing in my life. I am starting work on a foundation in Brazil for the poor in Rio and I am going to donate all my books to that when I die.

What was the thinking behind that?
Well, I don't have any kids and I don't have anyone in my family who cares about these books. I had to think what I would do with them all. So this is my dream. It is what I didn't have when I lived in Brazil. I didn't have a place where I could look at real books with incredible collections of images. I think it's good to do something in Brazil because I was born there and I am completely crazy for my country. I am crazy for my city. So I really want to create an opportunity for the people who don't have the money, so they can touch them and see these collections in a free way. It is not easy because doing a foundation is so complicated. So what I am doing is starting to think about how we do this. I'm not going to start giving my books away for, well, another 20 years! I hope I live a little more!

You've got time to plan it, but it gives you a focus to what you are doing. I like the fact there is a result, that you have an ending.
It's very important. At the same time I don't want to give the problem to friends or somebody in my family because, can you imagine if something happens to me? [Knocks on wood.] Where are you going to put all this? I don't want my books staying here; I want them to go to Brazil, you know. Years ago I decided to donate all my books when I reached 65. And then my friend asked me, ‘Giovanni, in 15 years are you sure you will be able to live without your books?’ I need to believe I can exist without my books; I need to do some therapy! In my heart I would not like to live without my books. But on the other side I don't want to do this when I am dead! I would like to see my foundation opened in my lifetime. I would like to go there and see people look at my books.



André Balazs Collection
SoHo, New York City
Photographs: Nikolas Koenig



André Balazs

André Balazs is both a public figure and a private man. And the success of his hotels is based on the similar offers of privacy when desired and public exposure when required. His group grew from the purchase of the Chateau Marmont in 1990 and now includes the Mercer, the Standard hotels and, most recently, the Chiltern Firehouse in London. And while Balazs has been successful on a grand scale, as anyone who has worked with him or even stayed at one of his hotels will know, it is a success built on an extreme attention to detail. For every hotel, from city to neighbourhood, building to room, chair to the joinery, Balazs has a hand in decisions about them all. In his office and his home, he goes even further into the details, pointing to a specific page marked up in one of the hundreds of books in his impressive design reference library. From an early age he used books to fuel his ambitions, and diaries to record his progress. Now, with many friends in the media and creative industries, Balazs has devoted a section of his library to the books they publish. It is a complete circle: books as impetus and end result.

> ‘Books were meant to be physical objects that were destined to be kept as part of my intellectual journey through life. I always thought of it that way.’

I am going to say very little. You tell me about you and books.
André Balazs: First I should explain that I use books very interactively. I mark them up; I tag them; I use them for reference. I started collecting my books and using them as a form of diary in and around eighth grade. I would underline books heavily, date them and annotate them. I would date when I started them and when I completed them. They were meant to be physical objects that were destined to be kept as part of my intellectual journey through life. I always thought of it that way.

Were you always using books to advance your knowledge and yourself?
Well, it depends on which books. I live with books both at home and in the office. There are four main categories of books in my library. Very early on I was interested in philosophy. I never read fiction. I always hoped my life would be more interesting than fiction. There were a few writers who I admired for their participatory nature: Tom Wolfe, Norman Mailer and Gore Vidal, who was an early hero of mine. They were people who were not just observers but also participated in the rough and tumble of life and I felt that was compelling. So my early readings were philosophy and about people like that. I very much saw these as journals of a life well lived, fully lived and documented, and that is what I started collecting. Well, not collecting, but I found myself keeping them and storing them next to my own diaries up on shelves where I grew up in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

So that’s one category. What are the others?
When I got into the business I am in now I started to look at design books particularly. I found certain things just require tremendous repetition to get right. It’s an old adage that there is nothing harder to design than a chair because, basically, there have been a million designs before, so to get it just right is tremendously difficult. To have access to the original attempts at this kind of stuff was very interesting and I started finding the original sources in old books. And I started to really get into these photographs from the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, and buying collections of everything from catalogues and magazines to unique one-of-a-kind books. At one time, early on, I wanted to be a dancer. I was always very interested in it. My mother was a gym mistress and dancer. I was very interested in early dance groups, pre-dating Martha Graham[1], like the Denishawn School of Dancing[2]. Also the early naturist, nudist movement – I became very, very interested in that. Post-world wars in Europe, there was this tremendous emphasis on good health. And fresh air, clean living and exercise was all part of it. And with that came, in Germany and Scandinavia, this whole naturist movement, which is accompanied by group exercise, like archery or dancing. I became a very, very big aficionado of this naturist movement combined with modern dance and images of it, because I found them very beautiful and very modern. Unlike those kind of more overtly erotic pictures from the 1920s in Paris and the Weimar Republic, these were pictures based on body types that in today’s language you would view as the ultimate in good health. Not overbuilt, not anorexic, but healthy bodies. It’s not sexual at all: it bears a closer resemblance to dance and physical health. I am a big fan of Pilates and I just read the history of Joseph Pilates[3] and the aesthetic of the dance and movement that came out of that, which then got picked up by the Denishawn School. That spoke to me very deeply because they were located across the street from the Chateau Marmont. So, for example, when I bought the Chateau about 25 years ago, we actually started running ads just to give atmosphere to what I hoped the Chateau would become – which is this very free, open-minded, healthy environment.

That’s two categories; what’s the next?
And then the last category I have simply because of the kind of friends I keep and enjoy. I just started realizing that probably one out of every four people I know has published at least one book. So I have a section of books that are by my friends, good or bad, it doesn’t matter; I have hundreds of books by people I consider good friends. I had a minor accident that was emotionally very traumatic for me when Katie Ford[4] and I first got married. I had a very extensive post-college library and when we were moving into a loft in SoHo we put our belongings in her parents’ house in Connecticut. They had a fire and the tragedy for me was that many, many books I had perished, including all my personal journals. I think the subsequent interest in collecting friends’ books was a direct evolution of that. I found myself early on in the words of others and in the worlds of others. Part of my life continued on in the writings and thoughts of my friends; it just happens that they are incredibly prolific.

To me, having books and a library is all part of the richness of documenting your own experience, bringing you closer to those things that inform you. This is all very eclectic; I probably have as many political biographies as I do design books. But about 10 years ago, I decided I wanted, for professional and other reasons, to have design and photo-history books. I don’t mean regurgitations of texts, I mean original stuff. I decided that I was going to try and build one of the better design libraries.

> ‘I realized that one out of every four people I know has published at least one book. So I have a collection of them; good or bad, it doesn’t matter.’

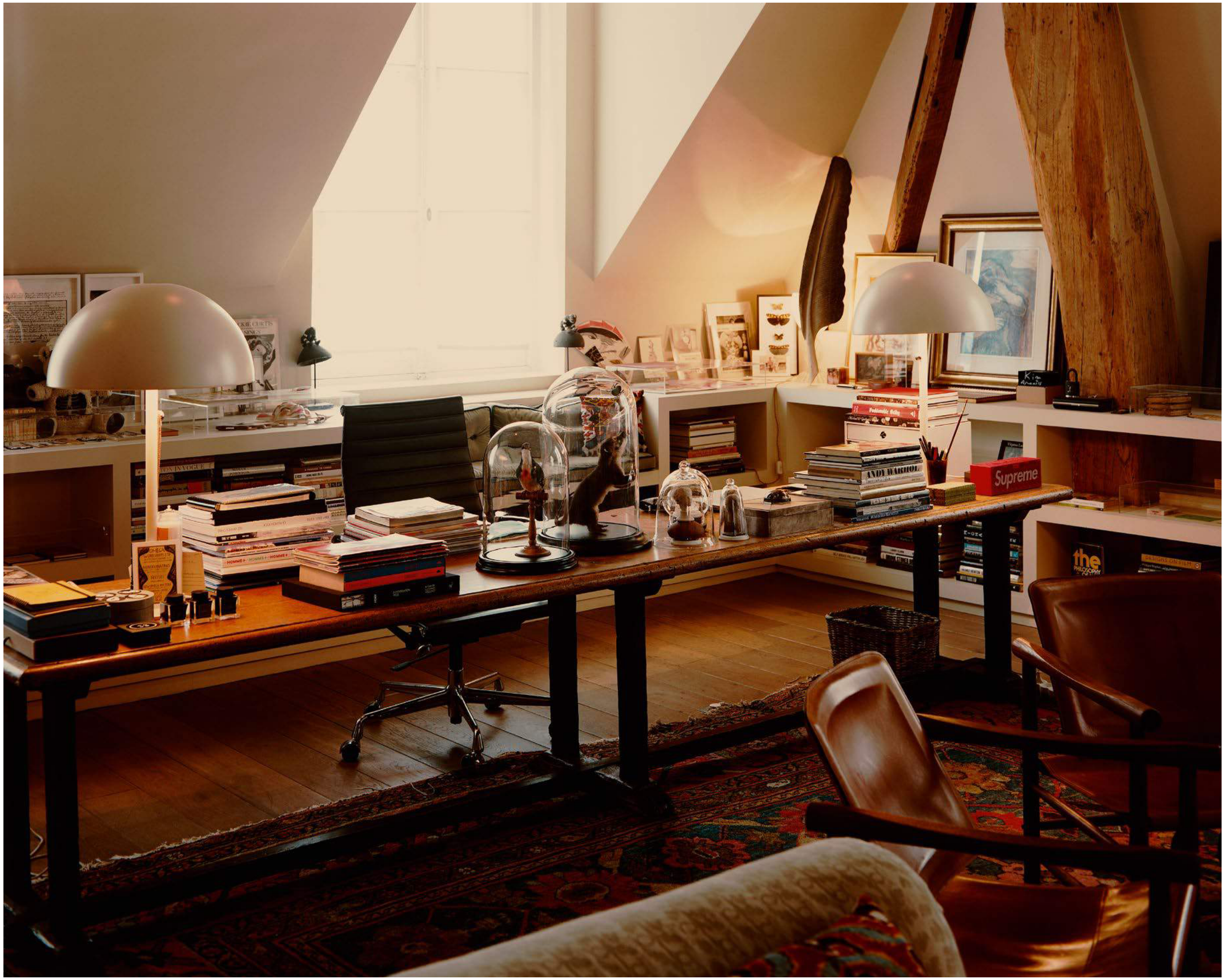
I like how closely the library influences and then reflects your life and work.
I grew up in Sweden; my parents are from Hungary, but in 1943 they moved to Sweden and lived there for 16 years or so. They lived in a very modern house just when all of the most modern Scandinavian work was coming out after the war. When they moved to Cambridge, we moved into a house that was radically modern. And a few years ago I was up there and I just bought a book published in 1963 on modern Scandinavian design in a used bookstore. I took it home and I was so proud of it. And the next week I went to see my mother who was still living in the house I had grown up in. I was browsing through the library there and I found exactly the same book that my father had bought in 1963! So I suddenly had two books side by side, one I bought years later and the other that he had bought the year it came out, complete with the markings on the pages of things that he admired. So I now have two identical books, one with my own tabs and one with his from 1963.

[1] Choreographer Martha Graham (1894-1991) influenced generations of dancers and was named ‘Dancer of the Century’ by *Time* in 1998.

[2] The Denishawn School of Dancing and Related Arts was founded in 1915 in Los Angeles by Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn. Alumni included Martha Graham and silent film star Louise Brooks.

[3] Joseph Pilates (1883-1967) was born in Germany. He moved to the UK, but was interned on the Isle of Man when World War I broke out. It was here that he perfected the exercise regime he called Contrology and which now bears his name.

[4] Katie Ford was the CEO of Ford Models from 1995-2007.



Kim Jones Collection
Paris, 75002
Photograph: Mario Palmieri

Kim Jones

There are many minimal executive offices lining the corridors of Louis Vuitton's headquarters in Paris, but Kim Jones' is not one of them. His office could best be described as busy. There are people ducking in and out and asking questions, but there is also stuff: books, photographs, auction catalogues, keepsakes, African and Asian art and craft, vintage clothing, scrapbooks, gifts and gift notes. To many people these might just be inanimate objects, but to Jones this is where the action is. A copy of *Antonio's Girls* by Antonio Lopez, dedicated by Lopez to Studio 54 impresario Steve Rubell, is a source of creative energy. And that copy is only one of three, all signed to different people, that he has to hand.

> **'I'm definitely a completist. If I like something I have to get every single thing of it, whether it's the Bloomsbury Set, Omega, or modern things I love.'**

He likes it to be personal and he likes it to be real. So he has a complete look from Vivienne Westwood's 'Pirates' collection; a full run of *WET* magazine; the actual desk from Virginia Woolf's study. Jones holds a great respect for the creative lives of others. In acquiring something of those lives and keeping it close, he channels that spirit and talent into his own work.

Tell me about your books. What do you have here?
Kim Jones: There isn't one specific genre. It's not just fashion. I like facts. I'm not very good at reading fiction I have to say, but I love a biography. I love any sort of photo book of an era or a time. I look for an insight into people's lives, not just their art. Culturally I'm interested in so many different things.

You are extremely thorough in your buying…
I am definitely a completist. If I like something I want to get every single thing of it. Whether it's Bloomsbury[1] or Omega or modern things, just things I love. They have all become part of my life. You could take me out this room and still see who I am through the books or clothing or the art I have. I can also picture other people through things and that is why I love those auction catalogues [such as the Yves Saint Laurent or Versace house sales] where you can see interiors and ideas and how people put things together.

And can you see how it ends up in your work in terms of the collections? When you travel somewhere in the world, the culture or craft are shown in designs. But when you go somewhere through books, how does that work?
For me Louis Vuitton is a travel house and I base every collection around something related to travel or a destination, because it is what our customers understand. They like the storytelling and understand that. There have been pivotal books for me. Leonard Freed's *Black in White America*[2] was something I used to drag in front of Louise Wilson when I was at Saint Martins. There is a guy in the book leaning against a wall with the perfectly cut chino. It was just me, her and a pattern cutter and because the guy in the photo is in such an awkward shape, we were like, 'How the fuck are we going to do this?' I was just screaming and shouting and then laughing when we finally got to the point. Jackie Nickerson's book *Farm*[3] was something I picked up and got obsessed about: how these people had no money and styled themselves. The Kim Jones 2007 Spring-Summer collection was based on it. Now I work with Jackie and she does all our pre-collection lookbooks. She is such an amazing woman. She is out there obsessing about the same details. We might both be behind the camera and she'll be like, 'Oh, that's a bit weird, shouldn't it be like that?' She has that sixth sense.

And there are periods of history that you love…
There are whole subjects. Studio 54 was such a massive thing. This place where everyone went. So to get all the Steve Rubell books and ephemera [at a 2013 sale of Rubell memorabilia] was amazing. Just pulling things together, they tell a story of a time that is interesting. You can sort of create an impression of it.

Are you constantly interested in finding new subjects?
My eyes are never shut, that is one thing I can say. When I walk down the street, compared to someone else, it's totally different. Everyone is like, 'How do you see that? What made you look at that?' It's probably down to growing up somewhere like I did. I was living in Africa for quite a long time when I was a kid. A lot of our time was spent spotting animals in the wild and, you know, to see a leopard in tall grass is impossible. We would be on these trips in a car for nine hours, so you sort of focus on stuff and look at things, so that was definitely one of the founding influences.

It can't just be people in fashion like you who have this obsession with looking…
A lot of my friends are DJs and they travel the world. They are in a city that they don't know for two days, so they'll go and explore it. And anyone who has half a brain cell who's got an interest in the world and a passion for meeting people and seeing new things will then get interested in other stuff. And then there is someone like Michael Costiff[4], for example. He has the eye of the world that he's seen, whether it's Burkina Faso or Brazil to the carnival. I just think it's those people who are visually aware or who understand the importance of culture. It's a way of thinking.

It is a way of thinking that may be changing…

> **'I will multiple purchase a book that I really love. I've given copies of that Hiroshi *Seditionaries* book to people like Kanye.'**

One thing I say when I talk at Saint Martins is that it's fine to look at things on the Internet, but then you need to go and find it for real. Go and find that book and turn the pages and see what is on the other side of that page. Because if you like that picture in that shoot, then the chances are you will like the picture on the other side and that might be something less obvious, so go and think about it.

You give out a lot of books as well as advice.
Quite often I will see something I've already got and I will multiple purchase if it's a book that I really love. That Hiroshi book [Hiroshi Fujiwara and Jun Takahashi's *Seditionaries* clothing book] for example, I gave [model] Matt Williams one; I've given Kanye one; I think Marc [Jacobs] just got one.

And do you share much with other designers?
If I know someone is really into something. Like I know that Stefano Pilati loves Kansai Yamamoto[5]. We were in Japan together and found someone to introduce them. It is like building bridges, you know. I love Stefano's work and I think he is amazing as a person. Those sorts of things, where he was also like, 'Oh, you've got to go and see this supplier…' That give and take in fashion is kind of rare now because it's all about numbers and figures and stuff. But I think there is a lot more to give in that sort of way because I think if things are good then you should celebrate and enjoy them.

I think you enjoy these things perhaps more than anyone we know. You really love finding and buying things.
I sometimes joke when friends go to museums, 'Oh, I don't want to go that museum because you can't buy the things and it gets annoying.' I went to a Native American museum once and I said, 'Wow, those slippers are amazing', and the guy said, 'Well they're for sale if you want them!' That's my kind of museum!

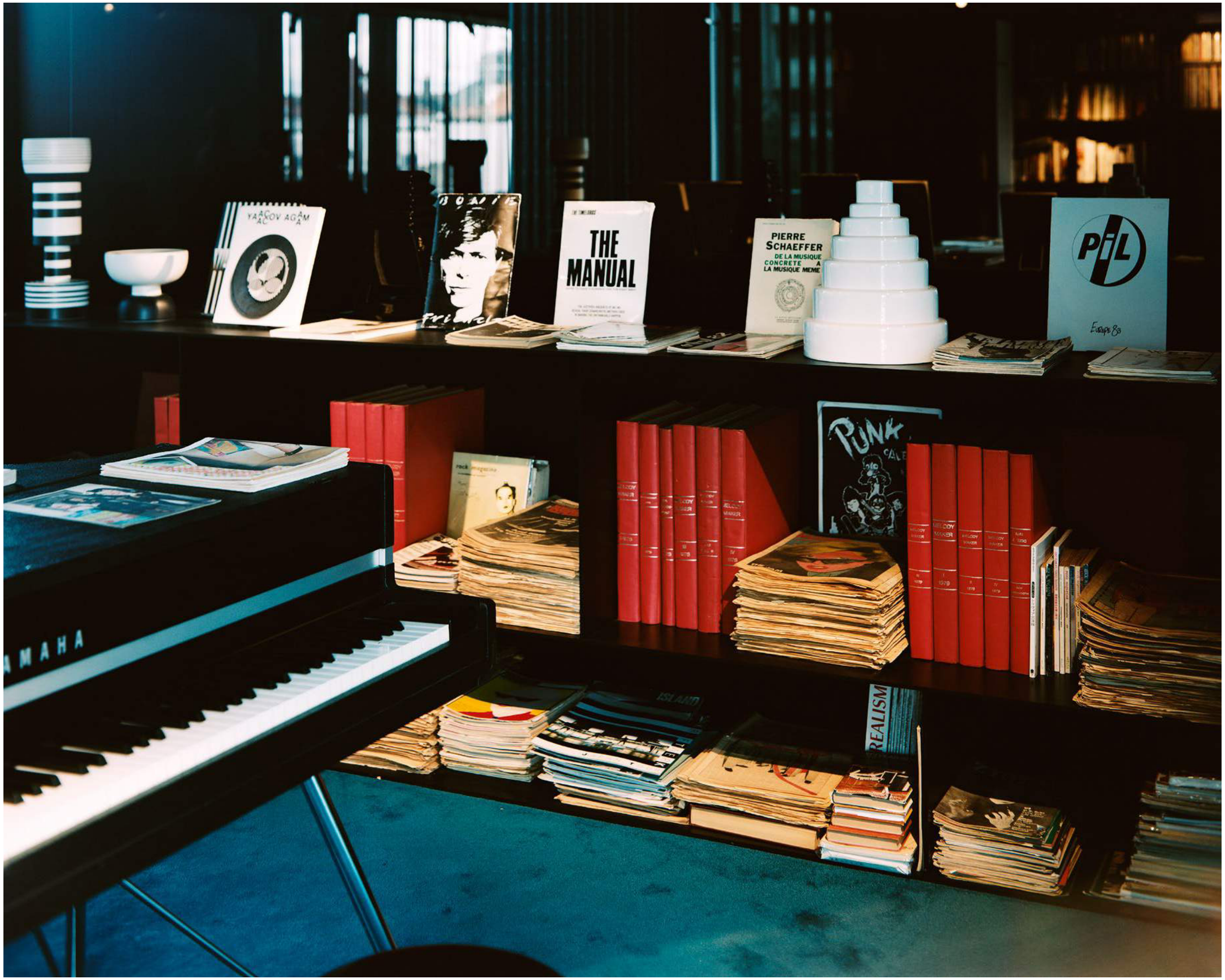
[1] The Bloomsbury Set was an informal grouping of writer, artists and intellectuals, including Virginia Woolf, John Maynard Keynes and E.M. Forster, named after the London neighbourhood where most members lived.

[2] Leonard Freed (1929-2006) was a Brooklyn-born photographer. His best-known work *Black in White America* (1967-68) is a striking look at the African-American community, particularly in the Deep South, and an innovative mix of photographs and snippets of text written by Freed himself.

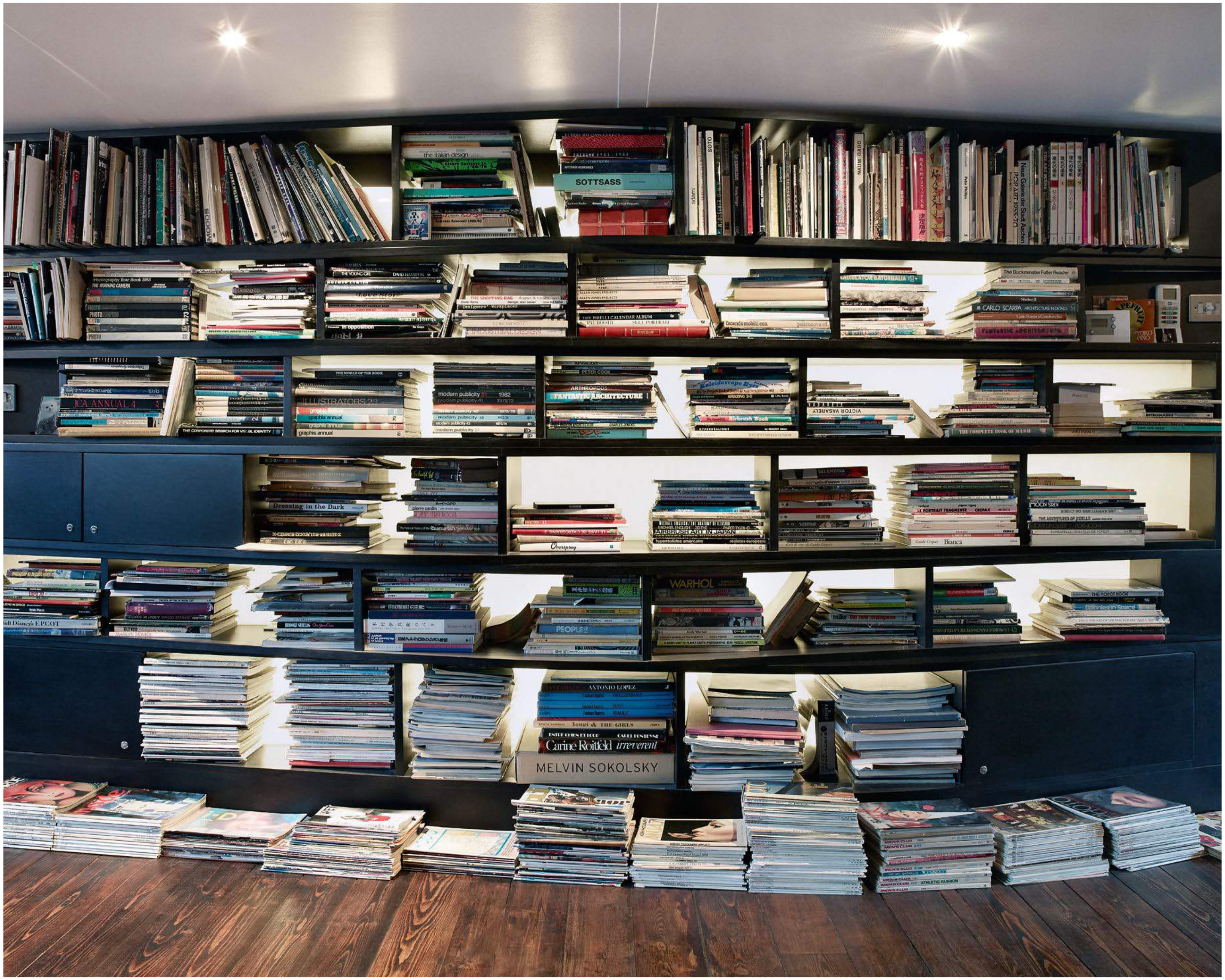
[3] *Farm* (2002) by Irish photographer Jackie Nickerson features a portfolio of pictures of farm workers in Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and South Africa that has since been widely referenced in fashion design.

[4] Michael Costiff and his late wife Gerlinde were at the heart of the 1980s London club scene thanks to their club night, Kinky Gerlinky. In 2013, Jones published a book of Costiff's photographs called *Michael & Gerlinde's World: Pages from a Diary*.

[5] Kansai Yamamoto is a Japanese fashion pioneer who provided many of the costumes worn by David Bowie during his Ziggy Stardust and Aladdin Sane periods.



2manydjs Collection
Ghent, Belgium
Photograph: Mario Palmieri



2manydjs Collection
London, EC2
Photograph: Steve Harries

2manydjs

You've heard (and heard of) Soulwax and 2manydjs. You are probably less familiar with the names David and Stephen Dewaele, the brothers behind the label-band-DJ duo. And you're probably completely unaware that the Dewaeles are dedicated and voracious book collectors. From their bases in Ghent and London, and everywhere from Mexico to Tokyo, they are constantly travelling, DJing by night, book-hunting by day. The brothers were brought up in a musical household (their father was a well-known radio DJ in Belgium) and formed Soulwax in 1995 when Stephen was 25 and David 20. Today their world of music, books, magazines, documentaries, films and art has become a self-sustaining culture machine fuelling the creation of new ideas and work. We met up in London where they stock their books on everything but music – those are back in Ghent, with their 55,000 vinyls – to discuss what drives their passion for the printed page.

> **'We buy books on everything: Fiorucci, Woody Allen, anything counterculture, 1960s, 1970s, cybernetics, Archigram, Sottsass, Memphis...'**

Tell me what you buy.
David Dewaele: I guess maybe everything. The obvious ones are books on Fiorucci, Woody Allen, anything counterculture, 1960s, 1970s, cybernetics, Archigram[1], Sottsass, Memphis[2]; everything that's airbrush, photography… but obviously photography is such a broad label it can mean anything… It's books about everything.
Stephen Dewaele: But in reality it's not actually everything…
David: When we go into a bookshop we don't necessarily gravitate towards gardening or, you know, psychology books.

And why are you buying almost everything?
David: When it comes to music books it is very clear why we buy them. It is easy to trace back. We grew up in a house where there were always promotional copies and pictures and press kits and all that stuff lying around.
Stephen: That's where we come from.
David: I mean, I don't want to get too Freudian here, but it might be reaching back to where we came from. It doesn't explain why we buy Archigram books though.
Stephen: I think that as kids we saw new record sleeves all over the place and our mum and dad were buying the magazine *Hara Kiri*[3] all the time. That was normal. So we grew up amid this imagery that's evocative and sometimes takes you to another world. When you are a little boy, you get lost in that.
David: It still doesn't necessarily explain why we have got a big collection of typewriter-art books!
Stephen: Because they're amazing!
David: There are a lot of things that we buy where there is no direct vehicle for them in our work, but we are still as eager to buy them or get them.

Like books on Concorde.
David: Yes!

Do you both approach your book collecting the same way?
Stephen: In the beginning if both of us went to the same place separately, we would both come back with the same records or the same books or the same trainers, the same. But I think we've become experts in trying to go even deeper and get to the next level.
David: With music we have even come to the point, Steph and I, where we go to record stores and buy things we don't like yet but that we think we might like in 10 years!

That is crazy. Do you do that with books, too?
David: The one thing I would say is that we're not completists. If we've got issue five and seven, we do not need to get issue six.

With music it is clear: you buy records and you are also making music. But with books, you are not making books or magazines…
Stephen: When you look at our recording studio you can see we are using really old mixing desks and a lot of materials that have a character and a sound that we like. It is a medium. We have never made or published a book, we have never done any of that, but it is definitely a medium that really interests us. You start getting into how something is printed and there is a whole technical layer that we are really, really interested in. The same interests we have in music, the same thing with us buying 16mm cameras and finding out how they work. There is also an element of experimentation. Maybe searching for something.

Tell me about the spaces you have. You built your studio in Ghent around your record collection. Do you have similar plans for the books?
Stephen: We want to do something. Storing books like this… putting the spines towards you and classifying them like this is annoying. We have so many good things and the reason we have them is to be inspired by them. In the studio we are trying to find a way that we can display them, sort of like in a shop. So you can change around the covers that are on display. Otherwise with records and books, you store them in a beautiful way and you always see the spines, but you never see the cover art and you kind of lose track of them a little bit. We want to have a shelf where we can just put up new stuff every week.

Displaying the covers is a means of sharing them and the ideas. Is sharing what you've found a motivation?
Stephen: I think that a lot of the friendships with people who are really important in our lives have come through shared taste and enthusiasm. Fergus [Purcell, aka Fergadelic[4]] is a really good example. He is someone who gets it on every front: music, film, photography…

> **'In Tokyo, you go three flights up and there's a guy sitting there: he's got every book you ever dreamed of, or didn't know that you were dreaming of yet.'**

But these days kids do all that connecting via social-media profiles…
David: Yes, but on Pinterest or Instagram you look at the online collection of what someone is saying they are into, and it's like, 'Wow, cool', and then you click on it and you actually know who that person is in real life, and it is like, 'No way is that the same person!' There's no connection. It's only because that person has seen that someone else has liked it that they think that's what they need to show, to come across as more intelligent. And it doesn't only apply to records or books, now it's just part of life. People are living a second life, one that's an extrapolation of what they live in real life. We are dinosaurs because we don't do any of that. We are [gesturing to all the books] real life!

Kids now might not have the compulsion to buy the things they like.
Stephen: But why would they? They don't even have the money. They wouldn't think about it. There was a long time when we couldn't afford to buy a £100 record or book because that was a lot of money. And we would gravitate to whatever was free or whatever was cheap or what you could steal. I do think that if I was growing up now that it would be an amazing time. We collect these things physically but young kids are looking through it all online in a digital way. I do feel that it does influence them. I think in music and in printing there are artisanal ways of creating these objects that we might think we would lose in the digital world, but then on the other hand you see these kids obsessively going back to that record or that book or that espresso machine.

Online or real world it may well be the same obsession.
Stephen: For me a really amazing book fair is like a holiday. There is nothing cooler for me than going there and coming out with unexpected things.

It is like going to Japan.
Stephen: I dream about Japan…
David: We call it Treasure Island because there is always something and it's usually not in the place you expect it. You walk two blocks and there's a new shop that wasn't there the last time. You go three flights up and there's a guy sitting there and he's got *everything* you ever dreamed of or didn't know that you were dreaming of yet.
Stephen: Japan is Treasure Island, like Amazon for cool people…

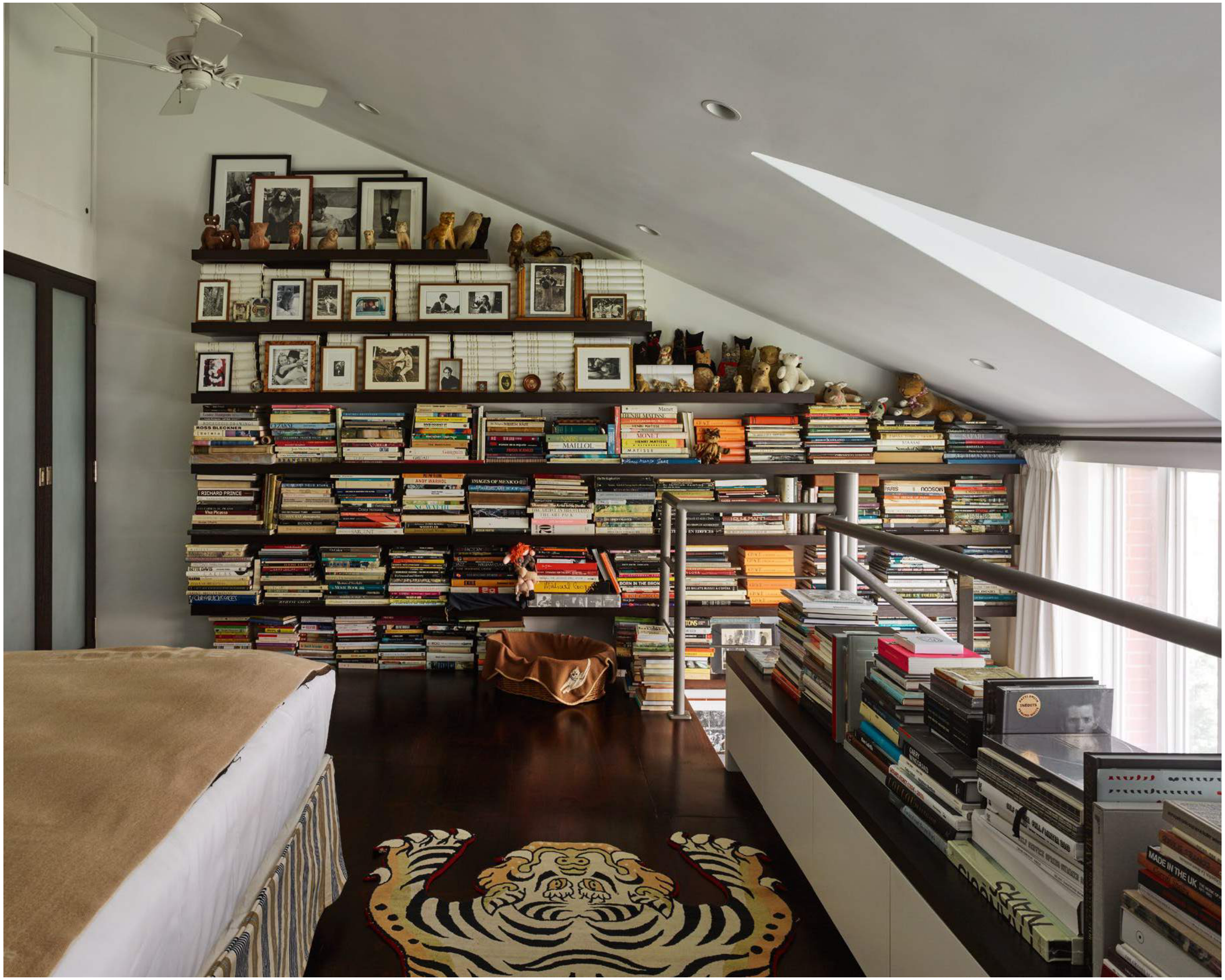
---

[1] Archigram was an architectural collective made up of Warren Chalk, Peter Cook, Dennis Crompton, David Greene, Ron Herron and Michael Webb. Its eponymous magazine, first published in 1961, was an ongoing critique of the perceived stasis of the architectural establishment. Their work remained largely unbuilt, but influenced a generation of architects including Renzo Piano and Toyo Ito.

[2] Memphis Group was a collective founded by Italian architect, designer and photographer Ettore Sottsass (1917-2007) and supposedly named after a Bob Dylan song (*Stuck Inside of Mobile with the Memphis Blues Again*). After a September 1981 launch party that created a near-riot among the 2,000 guests, Memphis' brightly coloured, asymmetrical and ephemeral furniture and design objects went on to symbolize the best and worst of 1980s postmodernism.

[3] French satirical magazine *Hara Kiri* was founded in 1960 by François Cavanna and Georges Bernier. Effectively banned by the French government in 1969 after a cover making a joke about the death of Charles de Gaulle, it was replaced by a new magazine: *Charlie Hebdo*.

[4] Fergadelic (Fergus Purcell to his mother) is a tattoo artist, and clothing and graphic designer, based in London. He made his name with Palace Skateboards (he created its triangle logo) and has since collaborated with Stüssy, Marc by Marc Jacobs and McQ, among others.



Grace Coddington Collection
Chelsea, New York City
Photographs: Nikolas Koenig

Grace Coddington

Pre-Internet, pre-digital and pre-eminent. Grace Coddington has been a *Vogue* fashion editor for three decades and thanks in large part to *The September Issue*, is now one of the industry's most recognizable figures. Grace's entire working life has been in print – as a model, as an editor, as a voracious researcher and book buyer. As the world becomes ever more digital, Grace retains her love of objects. The Manhattan apartment she shares with her partner Didier Malige and their cats Bart and Blanket is packed full of books, while on the shelves stuffed toys, ornaments and mementos fill any gaps between the books. The walls are filled with framed photographs; look in any direction and you see back in time to classic shoots by Bruce Weber and Steven Klein. Yet, for Grace, these books and photographs are perhaps the future, too, maybe the spark for the next shoot or issue. This organized chaos is her inspiration, her frame of references; the work itself is all around her. Her ideas, her friendships and her books are all interwoven. It is a network, if you like. The apartment as a model of the creative working mind.

You have the books piled up in what I consider quite a Parisian fashion, lying flat rather than spine out.

Grace Coddington: I moved in one day. I had all the interns from *Vogue* help me and they just opened up the boxes and shoved them on the shelf. It is not the most convenient way to find things and we've got a million books since then and they don't fit in. It's not just me – a very big percentage belong to my boyfriend. He runs out and buys books every single goddamn day and he doesn't just buy one copy; if he sees a book he likes he buys six. So we have so many books and hundreds of the same book and that's why every little corner is full. And then it's the same again in the country.

Immediately, I can see books that relate to your work. Are these books a reflection of your career?

Yes, they are. One has a lot of inspirations and you know, for want of a better example, maybe you are doing something that's inspired by a Picasso exhibition and so you might go out and buy six Picasso books because you know you want you see the whole breadth of it.

Other people might have a book collection that is very aspirational with travel books of places that they would love to go to…

I don't have that.

Or objects they would love to have…

I don't have that either. They are all somehow related to a shoot I've been doing or am going to do. Obviously, there are others I have because they are by a friend of mine, a photographer, or I've contributed to the books in some way. Joe Szabo[1] just had a book come out on the Rolling Stones and he asked me to write the foreword, so I have that and that's not really related to anything I'm doing. But his first books – *Teenage* and *Almost Grown* – I found very inspiring fashion-wise.

There are also funny random books where you might say what the hell is that doing in there, but it will be something to do with a shoot. It's like a tree with branches and then they all lead to the story that you are trying to tell.

Many people who read this won't work with books and I think they will find it interesting to try and understand that.

There are lots of people who go out and copy pictures. I am very opposed to that, particularly in the fashion world. Helmut Newton is endlessly copied; Guy Bourdin is endlessly copied. And sometimes the pictures people are copying I actually got to work on! I think it's ironic. There'll be an inspiration board and there will be all these pictures and I see them setting off and putting people in the same positions and I say, 'You can't do that, I was there on the original shoot!' I don't need to do it again and actually you can't better the original photograph. Reference pictures are my pet peeve. Photographers say, 'Where are your reference pictures?' and I say, 'Oh, you know, just go and read the story of *Alice in Wonderland*'. I don't want to see how other people interpreted it; I want it coming fresh from you and the story. But now people rely on reference pictures because nobody has any time and everybody shoots back to back because of digital. They think they can do it faster and actually it takes the same amount of time, they just don't print it in the bath at night. They just move onto the next story and they don't actually have time to think anymore. I want them to go through the process. Nobody goes through the process anymore.

‘I had all the interns at *Vogue* help me move in. They just opened up all the boxes and shoved the books on the shelves. It's not ideal to find things.’

Tell me about the process and how it works with books. For example, the Bruce Weber *British Vogue* story ‘Under Weston Skies’[2].

Bruce gave me all the Edward Weston *Daybooks*[3] to read. I'm not a great reader so I must say I didn't actually read them all, but I looked at the pictures! And then we went out and had ‘an Edward Weston day in America’; that's what it was. The idea was inspired by that – but no individual picture was directly inspired by another picture, and that is why it's so fresh. Bruce brought me to American culture and I was completely ignorant about it. He taught me so much as a whole, a fashion photographer coming from a different angle. All these references: Georgia O'Keeffe and Andrew Wyeth[4], and then we did Weston.

And Bruce is a big book buyer…

Oh my god! He's another one who buys 10 of everything and he gives you a hundred books for Christmas. That's another place that these books have come from. He goes shopping with an entourage. He does it all through the year. He drags the books back to his loft and has them sorted into ‘this is what Grace would like’ or ‘this is for friends’. And I guess the Christmas present pile keeps growing. It's amazing. I completely took on his love of photographs on the wall. That is where my collecting photographs comes from. Also the books and vintage buying and the whole layout of a place. Yeah, I completely ripped him off! I used to think I was kind of minimal, but I'm not. There are too many things that I love, that I want to have.

There is a possibility that future generations will just be less bothered about books and possessions…

I don't think people are so focused on books anymore. When I did my memoir and they said, ‘Oh, we're going to be doing an e-book’, I said, ‘Oh please don't’. But they did. Well, I think they did an e-book; I haven't seen it. I don't care. I just wanted to make it as beautiful as possible – and they just wanted to make it as convenient as possible.

At least at *Vogue* you work in print.

It's a whole turnaround now at the magazine: the digital side is so much more important. It just is. We're old has-beens and they are plodding on and they need us for the moment because they haven't quite figured out – well they have figured out the digital thing, but not so that it makes money. The whole digital thing only has to take your attention for one second and then it doesn't matter and it's gone, and I think that magazines last a little longer. Not as long as books, but they do last a little bit longer and people do pass them on.

They survive, yes. Like you have books that are signed or full of Post-it notes.

Yes, and that's fabulous. Imagine coming across a book with little things jotted in the margin by some fabulous writer. I don't know, it just adds another layer to it. I have the most incredible handmade Bruce book from the Weston story.

That's what I was going to ask to see…

I tell you, it's amazing. It's in a paper bag and falling to pieces now. The National Portrait Gallery has asked to borrow it. Bruce made one book for me and one for himself. That is what he used to do with a lot of shoots in those days. And they are fabulous, but they are falling to pieces. I treasure it but I don't know what to do with it to preserve it. The one he did for himself, the same thing has happened. He does put them together with this black sticky tape and then it dries up and then it curls and falls off.

It is amazing.

It's priceless and if there was a fire that would be the first thing I would save.

‘When I did my memoir they said, We're going to do an e-book, and I said, Oh please don't! But they did. Well, I think so. I haven't seen it. I don't care.’

---

[1] Joseph Szabo's book *Rolling Stones Fans* is a collection of images the US photographer took at two Stones concerts in 1970s Pennsylvania.

[2] Published in 1982, ‘Under Weston Eyes’ was shot by Bruce Weber, styled by Coddington, and starred Talisa Soto and Bruce Hulse.

[3] ‘I see no reason for recording the obvious,’ wrote legendary photographer Edward Weston in the diaries he kept between 1928 and 1943. Published in 1961 as *Daybooks,* they chronicled his struggle to understand himself, society and his art. After his death in 1958, a beach at Point Lobos, California, that he had photographed since 1929, was renamed Weston Beach.

[4] Andrew Wyeth (1917-2009) was an American realist painter who worked largely in egg tempera. He was highly controversial throughout his long career, his work lambasted and loved in equal measure. When he finished what is now his most famous work, *Christina's World*, in 1948, he told his wife, ‘This painting is a complete flat tire’. It was bought soon after by MoMA in New York, quickly became a popular success, and is now considered an American icon alongside Grant Wood's *American Gothic* and Edward Hopper's *Nighthawks*.

Hans Ulrich Obrist Collection
London, W8
Photograph: Mario Palmieri

Hans Ulrich Obrist

Hans Ulrich Obrist likes a good conversation. (The *Interview Project*, his series of marathon discussions with key figures on the global cultural scene, is now 2,000-hours long.) But if there is one thing that Obrist likes more than the spoken, it is the printed. An inveterate collector of books since his childhood, the globetrotting curator-writer-publisher now has three archives of books in three different countries, to which he adds a book a day. For Obrist, paper not only has a future, in many ways, it is the future.

When did you start acquiring and collecting books?
Hans Ulrich Obrist: I had these very strange feelings already as a teenager that I wanted to do books. It was always my kind of dream to be able to do books, to write books, to edit books. So from the very beginning the acquiring of books was some form of non-systematic collecting.

> ‘I’ve got approximately 30,000 books in Berlin, about 5,000 in London, and probably another 2,000 at my mother’s house in Switzerland.’

I understand. It isn’t about being a collector…
I believe very much in this idea that when we use a car, we don’t necessarily have to own it; the same is true for houses, you don’t have to own a house. I’ve always been rather nomadic, so in different cities I rent apartments. But with the books, I do like to own them. I don’t like to borrow them because I like to carry them when I travel. I want to use them, I want to annotate them, and sometimes I need to keep them because of those annotations and the Post-it notes I stick into them. I need to own the books so I can do what I want with them.

It sounds like you aren’t precious.
It is not fetishistic, and it’s not iconoclastic either. Pierre Klossowski[1] was my great friend and he gave me a book many years ago. He dedicated it, ‘Ad Usum’ or ‘to be used’ – because books are to be used. This beautiful Latin sentence was always my motto in a way for the archives.

And so the book buying fuelled your career and that in turn fuelled the book buying?
Very early on when I was a university student I started working as a curator in parallel to my studies. I did my *Kitchen Show*[2] when I was 23 and then I started to work with Kasper Koenig[3]. I was curating this big painting show with Kasper and he insisted that I got the same fee as him. So suddenly I could buy books. I had a job for the first time that lasted for more than a week! Every single penny I earned went into books. So soon the apartment I shared was completely jam-packed with books.

I know you have always had more books than space. How do you manage that?
I was very inspired by Kasper and he had this wonderful system of order and disorder. I also went to see Alighiero Boetti[4] as a teenager. Boetti was a great inspiration in terms of classification. He made this beautiful book about the 1,000 longest rivers in the world. You can’t ever really measure a river 100 percent because it meanders, so then you follow one source and you establish an order, but that order implies again also a disorder. So in an interesting way it is order and disorder rolled together. I was kind of interested in this because I didn’t want there to be a system in my library where everything would be millimetre precise, yet I wanted to find things again. So I created this system of order and disorder. I took archive boxes and I would put every single document about an artist inside a box. So it was easy to find an artist’s box, but within the box there was kind of chaos. It was every invitation card, press releases and it was pre-Internet, with the fax machine permanently running in my apartment, so thousands of faxes, too. Little by little these boxes got stacked into gigantic piles. Box on top of box and sometimes they would collapse. It was a kind of architecture in the apartment.

How systematic are you at buying books?
Utterly, completely unsystematic. Some of my friends really are book collectors. They collect all the books by an artist and then they have to find, at huge expense, what they are missing. That is not my methodology. That is not part of what I do. It is more like being permanently inspired. I am driven by this curiosity, fuelled and driven by endless curiosity all the time. I buy books that I want to read all the time, but I also buy books because of their physical presence – some I just need to have. So there are different reasons as to why I buy books. It is always very spontaneous, but I do buy a book every day. I cannot survive if I do not buy a book every day. It’s very much a vital thing, like drinking coffee or breathing.

> ‘It’s always spontaneous, but I must buy a book every day. I cannot survive if I don’t; it’s very much a vital thing, like drinking coffee or breathing.’

Perhaps out of necessity because you have so many books, your archive is not just reference and inspiration, but also the subject of your work…
I became a professor at the University of Lüneburg in 1994 and my first professorship was to solve the issue of archives. I invited the German artist Hans-Peter Feldmann, who is a great master of archives, to do the project with me. So with my students we got a room in Lüneburg, an attic room that the university didn’t use. Hans-Peter would always come and so we had this sort of Feldmann study centre with the archives. We called it *Inter-Archive*. It’s very interesting because there I was, 26 years old, teaching at this university and how pretentious would that be to suddenly attribute value to my archive? Hans-Peter Feldmann came up with the most wonderful ideas about how to classify books, like weighing my archive, describing the smell, so many different criteria. You can do it by colours and it creates a very beautiful system. Then order and disorder. When you do that in your library it suddenly creates very interesting conversations. Feldmann did many classifications, by weight, what they felt like, touch. My archive became a kind of experimental field.

As you said, there are lots of ways of classifying and lots of ways of looking at a library, but people reading this will always want to hear a number. Do you know how many books you have?
There are probably 30,000 in Berlin. We’ve got about 5,000 in London, and there are probably about 2,000 in my mother’s home in Switzerland. These are the archives of my books, but then there are the archives of my work. I am very bad at archiving my own work because when one starts indexing one’s own work it is very suffocating. I always have to think about the next show and not look back. Serge Daney[5], the French film critic, wrote his mother and father a postcard every week from wherever he was, and I too started to travel a lot when I was young, so I started to send my parents every single article I published, every book which came out with contributions of mine, catalogues I edit, all of that, it all goes to my parents’ house. My mother always reads what I write so that keeps the connection.

It must be nice to feel like it is gone but not lost.
Yes, and a second copy of everything goes to Chicago, to the American artist Joseph Grigely[6], who decided to archive me early on in the 1990s. He thought it was funny for an artist to archive a curator because normally it is the other way around. So he asked me to send to Chicago a copy of every single thing I do. It fills maybe a FedEx box or so a month. So those are two more archives. And I am sure there are others that I forget.

Can you talk us through the construction of the archive?
When I was 23, 24, after the *Kitchen Show* I got a grant in Paris at the Fondation Cartier and I drove my very old Volvo to Paris; I’d jam-packed it with books – as many books as I could fit – and I went to Paris with this kind of transient library, on the move. So I was at the Fondation Cartier for three months and then from there I went to work with Kasper Koenig in Frankfurt. Then in 2000, I began to spend four or five days every week in Paris, but I would still travel every weekend. So that means we created the Paris archive, because we rented an apartment there, but with the old archives still in Lüneburg. Then in 2006 I came back to London to work, but the Paris archive was the newer one and my most important, because that was where I kept my interviews. I didn’t want to rely on the removals firm because the interview archives are so precious, so I put them into two gigantic suitcases and took the Eurostar to London.

The Paris archive had become the London archive, but then the bad news came: the University of Lüneburg had appointed a new dean and that new dean had basically asked McKinsey to make the university more efficient. As you can imagine one of the first things McKinsey asked was, ‘Why does some Swiss guy have 100m^2 in the attic filled with books when he doesn’t even live in Lüneburg and only comes a few times a year?’ So they threw out my books and in 2006 I found myself with nowhere to put them. London has exorbitant rents so I could never rent 200m^2 here for the 30,000 books. So then I needed to come up with a new plan and that triggered this idea to have a London archive for the Interview Project in my small apartment and then put the Lüneburg archive in Berlin because rent there was cheap at the time. So I rented a very big apartment there in 2006, and the books are still there. But they have never really been unpacked; they are still in these boxes. So it's a kind of situation in waiting. It's a place where I write because I accumulate books to stimulate my writing.

Rents in Berlin have gone up considerably so I recently began moving the archive to Brussels. It's cheaper and also really convenient to visit on the train. Flying is harder to justify now – too polluting – so I take a lot of night trains, but it takes 15 hours to get to Berlin! Brussels is much easier. My archive has always been in-between and now it is an inter-archive, literally.

> ‘We thought radio would vanish when television was invented but the opposite happened – radio became more creative. The same is happening with books.’

Is it possible for you to do what you do without your books?

Art books always have played a role and they still do. I have friends who are collaborators and who are 10 years younger, so now in their 30s, and they still have an attachment to books. We started this 89+ project for which we talk to artists born in 1989 or later. We already have more than 6,000 people in that archive – designers, artists, architects, and so on – the first generation that grew up with the Internet. And what is interesting is that one of the first patterns we observed – because we wanted to detect patterns in that generation – is that poetry is what links them all. There is this new energy for poetry. It is amazing how many brilliant young poets there are on the social networks. Yet for that generation the book is still relevant. We see a great culture of fanzines in the 89+ generation, a lot of artists doing their own DIY publishing. These are all things where people are not even relying on formal publishing anymore.

I wonder how much books have been a convenient medium and that convenience is shifting?

You can see it also with hardbacks and paperbacks. I read a lot of stuff on the Kindle and my iPad, and I wouldn't necessarily buy a paperback any more, but I buy far, far more hardback books. So I think in a way what is interesting is that there are certain types of books I don't have anymore: I certainly wouldn't have a telephone book; I have it online. I don't have an A-Z anymore; I have Google Maps now. Yet I don't buy fewer books than I used to buy and I think that idea of the book's reinvention is really interesting. We thought radio would disappear when television was invented, but the opposite happened and radio became more creative than ever before. So I think in a way the same thing is happening with the book. I read this great piece the other day in *Scientific American* that suggests reading on paper still has great advantages, in spite of e-books and tablets, and those advantages are not going to disappear. The brain interprets words differently on paper to screens. We often think of reading as a cerebral activity concerned with the abstract, with thoughts and ideas, themes, metaphors, motifs. As far as our brains are concerned, however, text is tangible. It is part of the physical world we inhabit, the brain essentially regards letters as physical objects because it does not really have another way of understanding them. So it is fascinating that from this new scientific point of view, books will not disappear, which is great. Paper books have a more obvious topography than books on the screen. A reader can focus on a single page of paper without losing sight of the whole text; one can see where the book begins and ends and one can even feel the thickness of the pages. Turning the pages of a book is like leaving one footprint after another on the trail, there is a record of how far one has travelled. All these things make reading a book more navigable, but also it creates a mental map.

Mental map is great way of putting it.

So what I did this weekend: I looked at hundreds and hundreds of books at home because we are working on a topic of resistancies and transformation, and I just went through all my books and made towers out of them. I think that very physical thing has to do with memory, and the books prompted lots of ideas. So it is like a mental map and in a way there is so much information on my laptop and my computer, it's like an infolded monster, it folds in so much information. But with a book, you have your four corners, your eight corners; it is simplified, that is also true for the book as an object. It is a very simple frame and that simplification allows you to build up a different kind of complexity, plus I can get lost in this enormous mass of information. So I think for my thinking and my writing it is an essential thing. The research happens both ways: there is analogue research and digital research, but I would hate to give up one for the other. I would miss something; I think we need both. I never understood why you would give up radio in the age of television.

What are you going to do with it all? Do you already have a plan?

No, I was happy with the books at Lüneburg because they were used by the students. I don't want this to be a dead archive; I want it to be a living archive. We did the Swiss Pavilion that I curated for the Venice Biennale in 2014 and we tried to manifest a statement about living archives by revisiting two great visionaries, Lucius Burckhardt and Cedric Price, through their archives. You would walk into an empty pavilion and then a student would come up to you with a trolley of papers and engage you in a conversation. It was live; it was performed. After Feldmann in Lüneburg and then Venice, I would love to continue on this track. Archives always get brought to you on a trolley and so this trolley became our display feature. So we are back to the idea of the archive on the move. In a way I would love to invent an archive that functions like this pavilion, but with a base where new people can give it new meaning, and that is what we are going to do in Brussels. For me the archives are like Russian dolls, there is an archive within an archive within an archive. For example, there is another archive between here and Berlin, which is all the signed books, what artists, poets, architects could sign or write in a book. What one writes in a book I think is always very interesting. It gives me ideas for my own book signings because I never know what to write and some people have great ideas. So I have a whole archive of signed books. And that is the beauty of handwriting and that signed book archive was the trigger for my handwriting project on Instagram. I now have thousands of Post-its – and that of course is another sort of archive.

How old were you when you started acquiring books?

I think it all started when I was a teenager in Switzerland, in my room. My childhood room became more crowded with books. It was initially literature – like Robert Walser who became my childhood obsession – so there was a lot of literature books and then when I was about 13 I discovered Giacometti. I saw these long thin figures and I became pretty obsessed and I started to buy more and more art books.

And you've never stopped?

No! On Saturday I saw this wonderful book shop and suddenly thought, Wow I need to go there, and I bought five new books. I hadn't even planned to buy books, but it's always like a *flânerie*.

1. Pierre Klossowski (1905-2001) was a writer, translator and artist and an expert in the work of the Marquis de Sade. He was the elder brother of painter Balthus.

2. In 1991, Obrist curated his first show, *Kitchen Show*, which despite being held in the kitchen of his student apartment included work by eminent artists such as Fischli and Weiss, Christian Boltanski and Hans-Peter Feldmann. About 30 people visited it.

3. Kasper Koenig was 23 when he organized his first show, Claes Oldenburg, at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm. The German curator cofounded the once-a-decade Münster Sculpture Project in 1977 and has curated it ever since.

4. Conceptual artist Alighiero Boetti (1940-1994) was a member of the Arte Povera movement and is perhaps now best known for his embroidered *Mappa*.

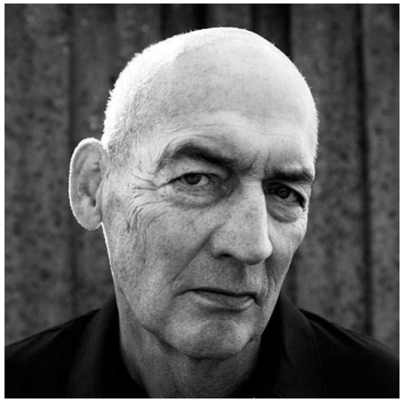
5. Influential French critic Serge Daney wrote for *Les Cahiers du cinéma* and *Libération*. He believed Charles Laughton's *The Night of the Hunter* to be the best American film ever made ‘because cinema is childhood’.

6. Joseph Grigely is a Chicago-based artist. Deaf since childhood, his work often questions conventions of language.

‘This new approach might be too extreme for jewellery.’

Why Rem Koolhaas’ new Repossi store is bringing revolution back to the Place Vendôme.

By Jonathan Wingfield
Portraits by Willy Vanderperre



Top to bottom:
Gaia Repossi,
Rem Koolhaas,
Ippolito Pestellini Laparelli

Ever since 1893, when Boucheron opened a store at number 26, Paris' Place Vendôme has been to fine jewellery what Savile Row is to tailoring, its harmonious Corinthian pilasters and columns providing the ideal backdrop for the biggest names in this most rarified of retail experiences.

Repossi's store at number 6 was the seventh jeweller to arrive when it opened in 1985. The house's third store after Monte Carlo and its historical base of Turin, it is today at the heart of Gaia Repossi's profound reassessment of her family business. It began with design. Gaia, who became creative director in 2007, creates jewellery almost like an industrial designer would, constructing pieces that she then strips back to their essence to reveal the purity of forms. This less baroque approach is now part of her broader questioning of the very fundamentals of jewellery – from why it is made to how it is sold.

'Jewellery can be a boring field with little room for creativity beyond marketing targets, but working with OMA feels more like an artistic experience.'

To help foment a revolution in jewellery retailing, Gaia got in touch with Rem Koolhaas's OMA architectural practice with a view to giving number 6 more than a spring clean. No stranger to conspiring with fashion brands (OMA has been working with Prada since 2001 and recently completed work on the new Fondazione Prada in Milan), Koolhaas relished the opportunity to bring his wide-ranging, deep-thoughts approach to an often hidebound consumer experience.

Gaia and Rem invited *System* to take an exclusive look behind the scenes of their collaborative process, and get first eyes on how the new Repossi store, which is set to open in January 2016, will look and function. We then gathered in OMA's Rotterdam HQ, along with OMA partner Ippolito Pestellini Laparelli to discuss the future of shopping, Gaia's Instagram account and why three's the magic number.

Gaia, what initially attracted you to the idea of collaborating with Rem and OMA?

Gaia Repossi: I called Rem and his team because I knew they would want to break codes and create a jewellery store that is everything but generic – an antidote to what Rem refers to as 'junkspace'. OMA constantly proves its ability to reinvent established methods, and jewellery is virgin territory for architecture. So many other fields have gone through reinvention, why not jewellery?

Rem Koolhaas: I think there is a tendency in contemporary culture to be totally redundant, which oppresses materials and oppresses environment, and so on. Ultimately I think that contributes to widespread dullness and a lack of contrast, which is very important to confront and interrupt.

Is questioning the status quo something that OMA does in any given domain?

Rem: The way you put it seems a little bit May '68 reactionary, and that makes it difficult to wholeheartedly say, 'Yes, we question *everything*'. We try to be a little subtler and so we simply try to work in *different* ways. We've always realized there are certain things that you could change, but then we also realize that disruption simply for the sake of it would be irresponsible. We like to operate, not between conservatism and disruption but between a historical consciousness and modernization. We modernize when it makes sense to.

Gaia, are there specific aspects of Rem's rhetoric you were keen to bring into this project?

Gaia: Rem's *S, M, L, XL* book contains some interesting thoughts about fashion and about the place that shopping holds in society. A lot of what he wrote makes sense to me: you make a product, you are responsible for it; you cannot just put it out there and add to the junkspace.

***S, M, L, XL* is now 20 years old. What role does shopping play in society today?**

Rem: Shopping is changing so fast. In the past 15 years we have obviously seen the emancipation of Asia and the Middle East, and we'll soon see the emancipation of Africa, too. With this comes the many possibilities of articulating these influences and these potentials. I'm really happy that we started to pay attention to those places at a time when there was little focus on them. Today, of course, it's staggering what can be done in those places.

Online shopping has obviously had a fundamental impact on the way society consumes, but how does this affect the thought process of an architectural firm like OMA?

Rem: We were discussing this with Gaia earlier today. What's interesting is that people come more prepared now.

Ippolito Pestellini Laparelli: Basically

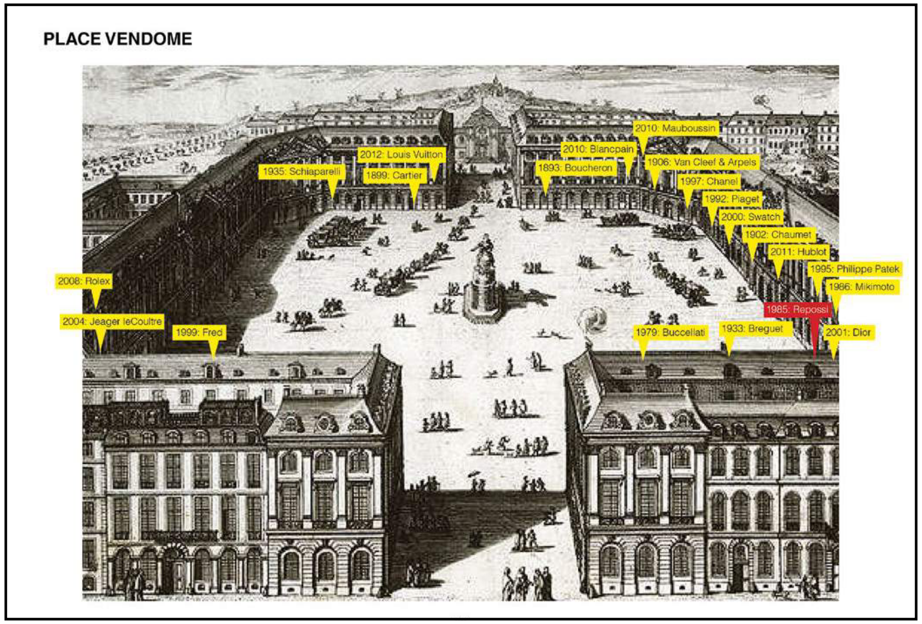


Image courtesy of OMA.

we don't think that digital will ever replace physical because the two offer such different experiences. The e-commerce domain is principally based on presenting products, accessing those products and then eventually buying them. OK, so you have these huge digital databases, but then you want to go to a store and actually touch and feel them, and understand where the product is coming from…

Rem:…and what the narrative is behind that product.

Ippolito: This inevitably affects the way that physical spaces operate: you often have much less merchandise exhibited, but it is done in a more curated way. The product becomes a vehicle for the cultural understanding of what has generated that product, from its choice of materials to the creative process.

> **'Gaia is one of the first people to have modernized jewellery – not necessarily because she wanted to change it but because she realized she had to.'**

Gaia: The most popular stores these days are technology stores, which seem to be everywhere. People just walk in, like it's a museum or a gallery, and hang out and want to experience things that are new every six months, every four months, every month. This new approach is perhaps too extreme for the jewellery industry, but I was really looking for an experience beyond just feeling comfortable on a couch looking at jewellery. The experience is especially poor in the jewellery industry; the more you go high-end and luxury, the less experience you're likely to encounter.

Ippolito: It is the dictatorship of sales: the profits are always in front of you and immediately accessible. There is no staging of the ceremonial that brings you close to the product.

Rem: I think it is anxiety about the stakes involved. Obviously the more money; the higher the stakes.

Do you think that anxiety is palpable in luxury shopping?

Rem: Very much.

Which is quite paradoxical since there is no luxury in anxiety! Gaia, to what extent have you reconciled in your mind the rapport between experience and product display in your store?

Gaia: My initial concern for the store was aesthetic, followed by experience. The difficulty has been in finding the right balance between the physical architecture and the existence of the jewellery. I mean, you could opt to go very minimal – though OMA tends not to – or there is the route of presenting lots of complex beautiful aesthetics… but then how does the jewellery exist within that?

Rem: That's the beauty of this situation: it really is a test, like a laboratory, and you can learn from it. For me, it was amazing to discover that the world of jewellery had such a furious degree of discipline.

Which can obviously be perceived as both positive and negative, right?

Rem: Yes, I was made aware of the discipline and ambition and tradition. When you're working in fields such as jewellery, it is really nice for history to suddenly become vivid and begin to resonate more. To be honest, prior to collaborating with Gaia I had never really given much thought to jewellery beyond the simple act of giving, so it's quite revelatory to have a more complete picture.

What elements of jewellery do you now understand better?

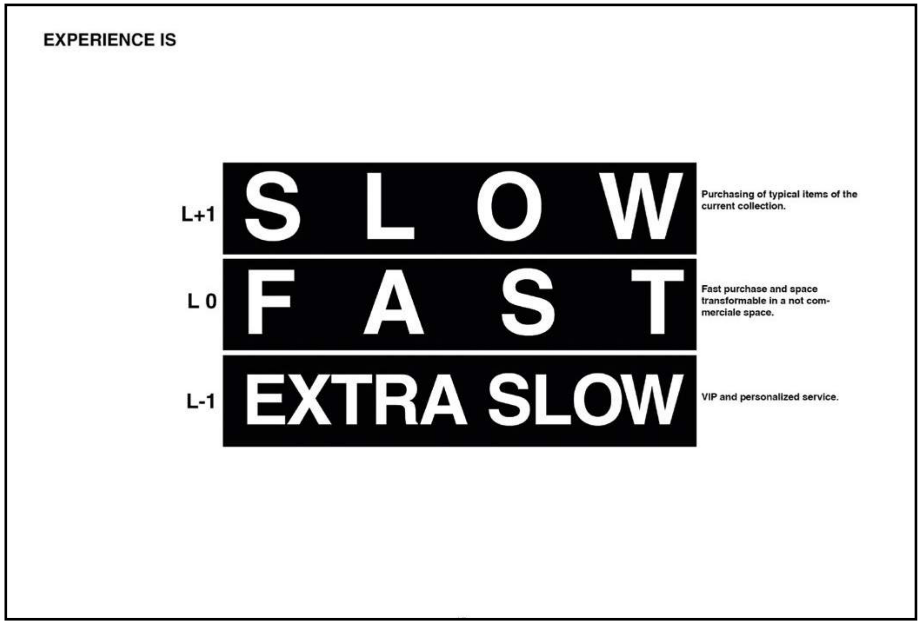
Rem: Well, it starts with something as basic as finding myself paying more attention to what are on ladies' fingers.

Ippolito: I barely knew anything about jewellery before working with Gaia; she really helped define some guidelines. But then we went off and explored the history of jewellery ourselves because we wanted to know how Gaia was changing the perceived normal methods of operating.

What did you learn?

Ippolito: I can certainly say that Gaia has a different way of working from other companies. I naively thought what she did was an artistic exercise around a very precious stone, which is the idea I had of traditional jewellery. Gaia confirmed that jewellery designers normally start from the material – from the stone – and that the design is developed around that stone in order to create the product. Hers is a different approach: she starts from the design – from the idea, almost on a conceptual level – and then you get to the product. It's a completely different mindset, which allows her to move faster and produce more collections throughout the year. This in turn allows her to think about the rapport between the space and the product in different ways.

Rem: This is also a very important point: all of us are influenced by our desires but there is an enormous pressure from the outside, so even if we wanted to stay the same, we could not because we have to work at different speeds and with different countries

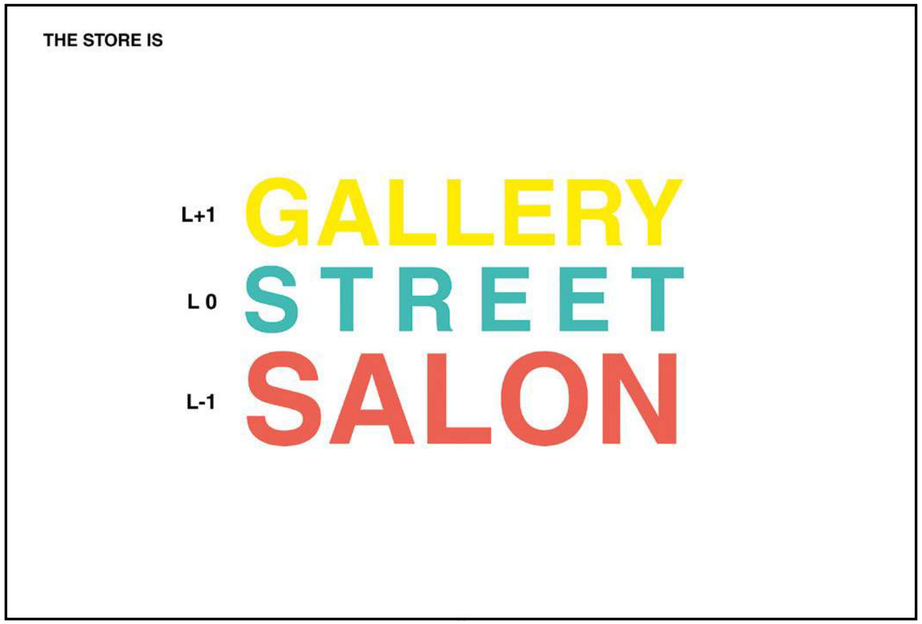


EXPERIENCE IS

L+1 SLOW — Purchasing of typical items of the current collection.

L 0 FAST — Fast purchase and space transformable in a not commerciale space.

L-1 EXTRA SLOW — VIP and personalized service.



THE STORE IS

L+1 GALLERY

L 0 STREET

L-1 SALON

Image courtesy of OMA.

and so on. Gaia is one of the first people who has actually modernized jewellery – not necessarily because she wanted to change it but because she realized she *had* to.

So if you don't believe in a system, you have to create your own.
Rem: It's also born out of the sheer acceleration; the way that more collections have to be launched in a shorter time…
Gaia: It's what people expect, and even that's not enough for them.
Ippolito: For me, the most revelatory moment in this project was visiting Gaia's ateliers in Italy and Paris. I got to see things being made in the same ways that they were centuries ago, but they are implemented now by new technologies. It's the perfect combination and balance of the two worlds and

Gaia, people often refer to your aesthetic as minimalist, almost as an antidote to the traditionally baroque jewellery environment.
Rem: But Gaia, do you consider yourself minimalist? Just look at her hands! [They are covered with rings.]
Gaia: I don't consider myself minimalist, because my designs are complex. Minimalist is just a label. I am attracted by less, but for me that's more a question of constructing things that are reduced to the essence.
Ippolito: There is something very architectural about your way of working.
Gaia: Well, we've found ways of working that place a little less emphasis on luxury and more on design and the expression of shapes and form through jewellery. As you discovered, it starts with a structure rather than a stone.

knowledge, but we also looked into Gaia's personal tastes and interests, as well as interviews she's done. We actually borrowed pictures from her Instagram account – mainly art and architecture – to create these kind of image campaigns. It was all part of developing tools in order to establish a dialogue.
Gaia: It is a very unusual way for architects to work: they absorb you for a couple of months, in the same way that maybe a film director would. Following that period, they started responding to my references and sharing their aesthetic.

Were you aware of that absorbing process even taking place?
Gaia: Not really because it was the first time I'd worked with OMA. It was a discovery, but a beautiful one. I generally love to overanalyse things and it was extremely constructive in terms of crafting some of the concepts of the store. So where you have a combination of things that are extremely simple, they are just recombined into more unexpected relationships. For example, normally when you walk into a jewellery store everything is very rigid and static, as minerals don't move. We introduced subtle degrees of movement in the store.

> **'Rem came to my office in Paris, looked at the jewellery, and said, If the design is simple I go complex, if the design is complex then I go simple.'**

Like kinetic displays?
Ippolito: Yes, exactly. Every single component has a degree of movement that forces you to have a relationship with the product that is constantly changing. And that for us was a revelation because the norm in jewellery is to approach everything with strict symmetry. We had a lot to play with.

Tell me more about the first conversations that you had together.
Gaia: Rem came to my office in Paris, looked at the jewellery, and said, 'But this is architecture!' He then said something very straightforward: 'If the design is simple I go complex, if the design is complex then I go simple.'
Ippolito: When we first met Gaia we felt there was a clear affinity between the two companies, and that is something we always ask ourselves, in order to gauge the potential to create something interesting. I remember the conversation: we were talking about some references hanging from the wall in her office, such as movies, sculpture, some furniture, something with Le Corbusier. I just wanted to know more; I acted like a sponge. As I mentioned before, we had to fill the gap about our lack of jewellery

this became a very deep analysis of the environment in which I work. The collaboration with OMA goes beyond just the store; we are reinventing the whole identity of the brand in the context and environment of the jewellery world. As I was saying before, it's generally a pretty boring field in which there is little room for creativity beyond marketing targets. But this feels more like an artistic experience because I consider OMA to be artists.

Can you give me an example of how OMA challenged the confines of the jewellery field?
Gaia: Within the jewellery industry you usually make a store that is described as an *écrin* – like the little box for a ring. So the traditional wisdom is that the interior has to be soft, and it has to be full

Image courtesy of OMA.

of comfortable materials. In one of the first research books that the OMA studio team created for us during the project, they made a collage of what they called a 'generic jewellery shop', entitled *What We Don't Want*. We then started by discussing speed and really got to the heart of analysing how speed determines the jewellery-shopping experience.

Ippolito: Each of the three floors of the new store is a different experience and has a different speed. Firstly, the basement is the most intimate, the space where you spend the most time and are attended to the most.

Gaia: The basement is actually closest in function to the classic *écrin*, but it is not at all that experience. Nonetheless, I thought it was still important to have a space where customers could isolate themselves and discover the more complex jewellery pieces.

Ippolito: Secondly, the ground floor is where you might have a rapid consumer experience: you know which products you want, you buy them, you leave.

Gaia: It has a standing counter that allows for five-minute sales.

Ippolito: Rather than the ground floor simply having an outward-facing window in which to display products, we refer to it as an extension of the street. It can offer a real void, an empty space, which on the Place Vendôme is the most surprising and luxurious thing you can find. We've introduced a system where on the ground floor the walls rotate so they can have different functions and different backdrops. It's one of the key kinetic elements we mentioned earlier.

> **'When the store originally opened in 1985 my mother was pregnant, and now I soon turn 30. Would Freud say something about that? Probably.'**

How does the wall rotate?

Ippolito: The interior wall is made of strips that can rotate into three positions. In position one, you have a huge visual that folds around the entire wall; it could be the brand campaign, or a piece of art or a visual reference.

Gaia: Brand image is obviously really important, so this option is essential. It is the first thing you'll see from outside.

Ippolito: Then, when the wall rotates into position two, it becomes a different material: a gradient mirror that looks almost like metal and from outside the store creates this void. The third rotation will then reveal products, which are placed within insets in the wall.

So the product is constantly rotating and only displayed one third of the time?

Gaia: Yes, I love the idea of introducing movement into a store environment that is usually rigid and frozen. This whole system offers an alternative to just having a window with products in it: now it can display the best pieces in the collections; it can show images of them; or it can simply let customers see themselves when they try things on.

Ippolito: Finally, on the top floor is the gallery, there is this intermediate-paced experience where the majority of the collection could be exhibited.

Gaia: It allows you to see everything displayed at once, like a sort of *cabinet de curiosités*, where the woman can buy anything she sees without much explanation.

I wanted to talk about scale. This project is inherently small, from the medium of jewellery design to the physical size of the store. To what extent does the size of the end result determine the process, the resources and so on?

Ippolito: I think that small scale is a universe unto itself; the deeper you go in scale, the more you discover. In 10 years of working at OMA I can honestly say I've never gone so deep into the exploration of a project as I have with this one – we've really had to consider the display of every single jewel. I can't say for sure if there is a direct rapport between scale and effort, it's perhaps more a mental shift towards another kind of domain.

What about the pace of working on the project?

Ippolito: Speed is a really interesting issue: for this project I think proportionally we invested more time given the size of the store if we compare it to much bigger projects. But those projects often have timeframes that need to go faster simply because the investigation of materials, skills and design was so accurate. So there is actually a sort of reverse proportion between the size and the actual time that we invest.

Rem: I agree; I think that is very well put. I've done both houses and much bigger projects and have discovered that doing a house is at least as complex as the biggest project out there. I think it's a very comparable situation.

Why do you think that is?

Rem: Partly because you discover more and more intricacies and therefore more challenges and more possibilities.

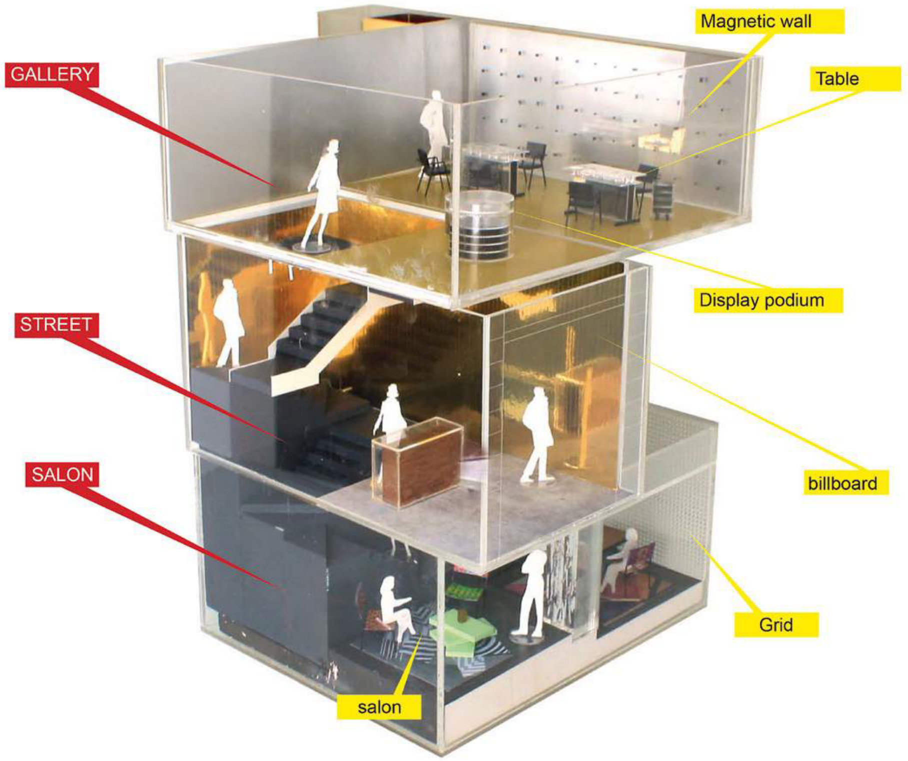


Image courtesy of OMA.

But it is also because you have a different sense of responsibility. In the case of Gaia's store, she can make the decisions directly, and we are talking directly with Gaia, not a committee of 20 people. It naturally becomes more personal and so you feel more responsible for the outcome. It is so precise and on such a traditional human level that there is no escape from going to the very essence of it.

Do you think that with such a small-size project there is a greater importance on editing?
Gaia: OMA is so prolific and can produce 100-page documents in a week and propose you 45 different options, so from my point of view editing was a real task.

You'd get 45 different options?
Gaia: Absolutely. Of materials, staircase designs… Visually it becomes like an artwork: you need time to absorb it, and of course there are references from my work and references from OMA's work, so the editing for me was very complex.

Ippolito: It's a very interesting point because as Rem was saying earlier, you develop a personal and intimate exchange during a project. There is a process to developing a specific language over this intense period of exchange, according to the client's background. So in the case of the 45 options that Gaia is referring to, our engineer develops these in order to actually generate the best exchange possible, tailored to the process.

Do you think creative collaborations require harmony between the various individuals or can interesting ideas be born out of discord?
Ippolito: I would say there is never complete harmony. We had multiple conversations and divergences during the process.

Tell me about some of that.
Ippolito: The choice of materials. What I find really helpful and constructive with a collaboration, though, is that when we didn't find a solution we would simply exchange references to reach a possible conclusion.

Finally, Gaia, the Repossi store has been on the same Place Vendôme site for 30 years. What does this current deconstruction and reconstruction of the store – and the brand – reveal about your rapport with your own family history and the family business?
Gaia: More than questioning my own family brand, I've gone on a kind of personal questioning of what luxury is – or could be – today. It's something I've been pursuing for the past few years; but for longer still, I have been questioning the function, design and utility of jewellery today. I've questioned if the next generation even *needs* jewellery and what luxury might mean for them. I've questioned these things in order to offer my family brand something that made sense to me, and that was relevant. With regards to the 30-year historical coincidence, when the shop opened in December 1985 my mother was pregnant with me, and I will turn 30 this March. Would Freud say something about that? Probably. All I know is that I'm very proud to be able to give this 90-year-old house a new direction.

Image courtesy of OMA.

To pre or not to pre

When will pre-collections shrug off their persistent, insistent prefix?

By Alexander Fury
Photographs by Jamie Hawkesworth
Styling by Marie-Amélie Sauvé

Pre-, simply defined, means before – in time, place, order, degree or importance. The last word is the main issue: pre-collections are perceived not simply as before, but lesser. Less important, less worked. When, in conversation with Louis Vuitton's CEO Michael Burke, I referred to them as 'interim', he shot me straight down: 'They've become the major collections; the major collections have become interim. Because they're very timely. Whereas cruise takes you from November all the way through to June. It hangs there that long. It's actually who you are.'

Which is an interesting concept coming from someone who knows. Pre-collections – the inbetweener seasons, shown across a few drawn-out weeks in December and January, and then again from May to July, have soared in importance, and prominence. Phoebe Philo's Céline, arguably the single most influential fashion brand of the past half-decade, has already dropped the pre-. It carves its clothing, internally, into four seasons: Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter. How long before everyone else follows suit? (And they so often do, with so many of their clothes.)

'The season has grown in importance as European designers gain strength in this country and require new merchandise to fill their shops and departments between fall and spring,' Bernadine Morris wrote in the *New York Times* back in June, discussing the contemporary fashion wonderland of the pre-collection. 'In recent years they have all added collections they generally call "cruise" for American stores. They also find that these collections are gaining ground in Europe.'

Pre-collections are no longer an afterthought, but a precursor. They are the main event of the fashion calender, both geographically and ideologically.

When I say June, I actually mean June 1989. Yet it could have been written yesterday. We think of the pre-collection as a phenomenon of fashion in the here and now, but they've been around for years. Formerly presented by scrabbled-together showroom presentations and rudimentary racks of garments only shown to buyers, journalists were blinkered to pre-collections – by both themselves, and frequently the designers. They were begged, like Dorothy Gale in *The Wizard of Oz*, to pay no attention to the clothes behind the curtain, that may dispel the myth of the Great and Powerful Designer.

Only, pre-collections always made the money. They still do. Brands from Proenza Schouler to Prada have told me their ranges account for 60-80 percent of overall turnover. Those figures cannot be ignored, which the brands certainly aren't doing. The triumvirate of French fashion behemoths – Louis Vuitton, Dior, and Chanel – are shipping guests across the world to experience theirs. 'Experiential' is the word most frequently tossed about, by people like Burke and Sidney Toledano, his counterpart CEO at Dior, to describe the importance of taking the fashion press on a voyage to express the ideas behind these collections. 'You have basically three days to tell your story,' states Burke. 'As opposed to 15 minutes.' That explains the lure of the pre-collection show: brands can monopolize the time of some of the world's most influential press, pulling them into another world, a world of a brand's own creation. That's why the French trio was joined this June by Gucci, the multi-billion-dollar jewel in the Kering crown, which staged its first ever pre-collection show, in New York.

Alessandro Michele, Gucci's freshly appointed creative director, said his collection, and that show, was about 'the girl on the street'. But really, these clothes are about anything but her. That's what all those trips express – it is about living the lifestyle of the cosseted clients who will actually be buying the clothes, the ones you often see at said shows, out in force in their natural habitat and dressed to the nines. They're the frequently assumed fictional one-percenters – except they're real (at least, parts of them still are). I've shared boats with them in Dubai and New York; I've watched them take seats in the blazing sunshine of Monaco and Palm Springs.

Pre-collections aren't about me – me being the fashion critic. They're all about them. They were founded on the needs of those women, established with the sole aim of pleasing them. More specifically, they were born in the holidaying wardrobes of women with the wherewithal to chase the sun in the winter months. Sunning themselves while the rest of the northern hemisphere shivered in triple-layered cashmere, they demanded something unseasonably light. Hence the names given to the pre-collections shown in May and June, which drop in stores around November: cruise and resort, because you do the former to get to the latter in these easy, breezy clothes. Sometimes designers have gotten trapped in that mindset – the ruse that cruise demands fashion straight off the Good Ship Lollipop. Of course, that's rubbish, as were many of the clothes.

So why are pre-collections – which have existed in some form since the 1970s, and have been a core of fashion retailing since the 1980s – only now moving into the limelight and being given their creative dues? There are multiple reasons, and in microcosm they summarize what's going on in fashion today. That, in itself, is why they are now being given so much attention, because they feel relevant and exciting and new. Frequently, newer than the catwalk collections they are supposed to punctuate, but in many instances, supersede.

Newness is a major reason for the pre-eminence of the pre-collection. It's something every CEO and many a designer has cited to me as something their clients demand, painting them as insatiable fashion nymphomaniacs driven by an overwhelming lust for novelty. 'They are excited by new things,' asserts Toledano, discussing the house's pre-collections and the fact that Dior product is now spliced into multiple fragments to feed Dior boutiques on a monthly rather than seasonal basis. 'For us it is six collections a year,' states Bruno Pavlovsky, president of fashion at Chanel, 'which means a collection every two months.' That's not clothing deliveries, but entire, individually conceived collections. Burke and Vuitton are similarly motivated by their clients' wants and needs. Burke allowed how, today, people don't only cruise to warmer climes but, in the topography of contemporary luxury, live there year round. Perhaps that's why the pre-collections, with their climate-flexing drops of summer knitwear and winter chiffon, nothing too heavy and nothing too light, have become such a vital component of the contemporary fashion landscape. The pre-collections are a no man's land, the all-important in-betweeners. A leveller.

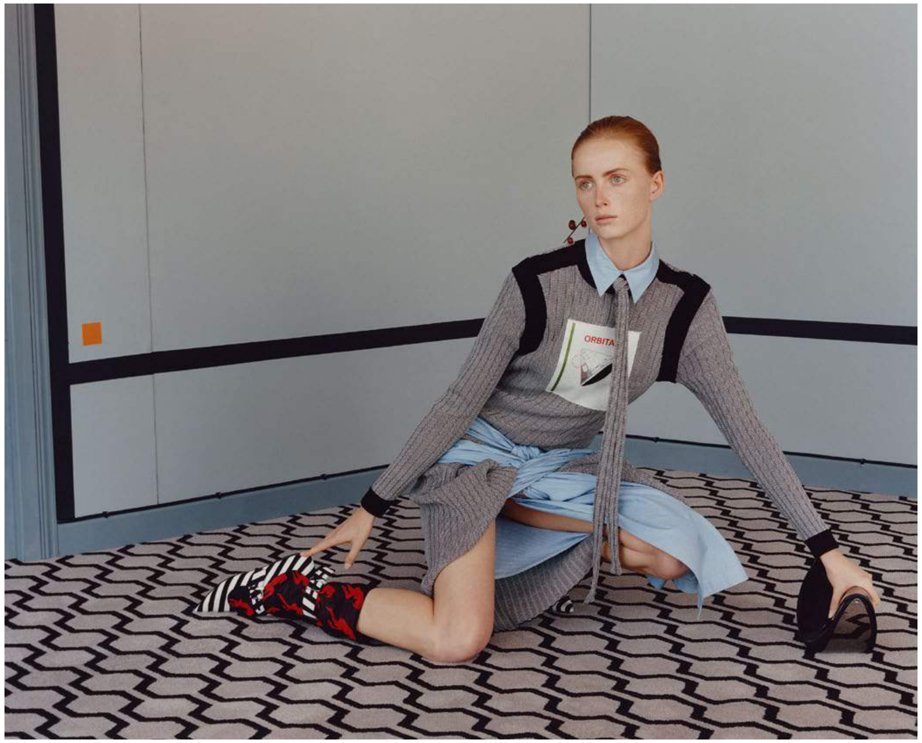
These collections were born in the holidaying wardrobes of those fictional one-percenters with the wherewithal to chase the sun in the winter months.

That seems disparaging – as if pre-collections are fashion's equivalent to the musical term 'middle of the road'. They're not, at least, not any more. Designers like Nicolas Ghesquière at Vuitton and Raf Simons at Dior have made sure of that. I remember seeing Cathy Horyn, then fashion critic for the *New York Times*, at a show in London. She remarked at how she had seen reflections of Simons' first Dior cruise show – an easy, breezy Monégasque escapade of patchwork lace and zip-front, free-flying silk – in the collections of numerous other designers. I agreed. 'That one collection has been a goldmine,' she commented.

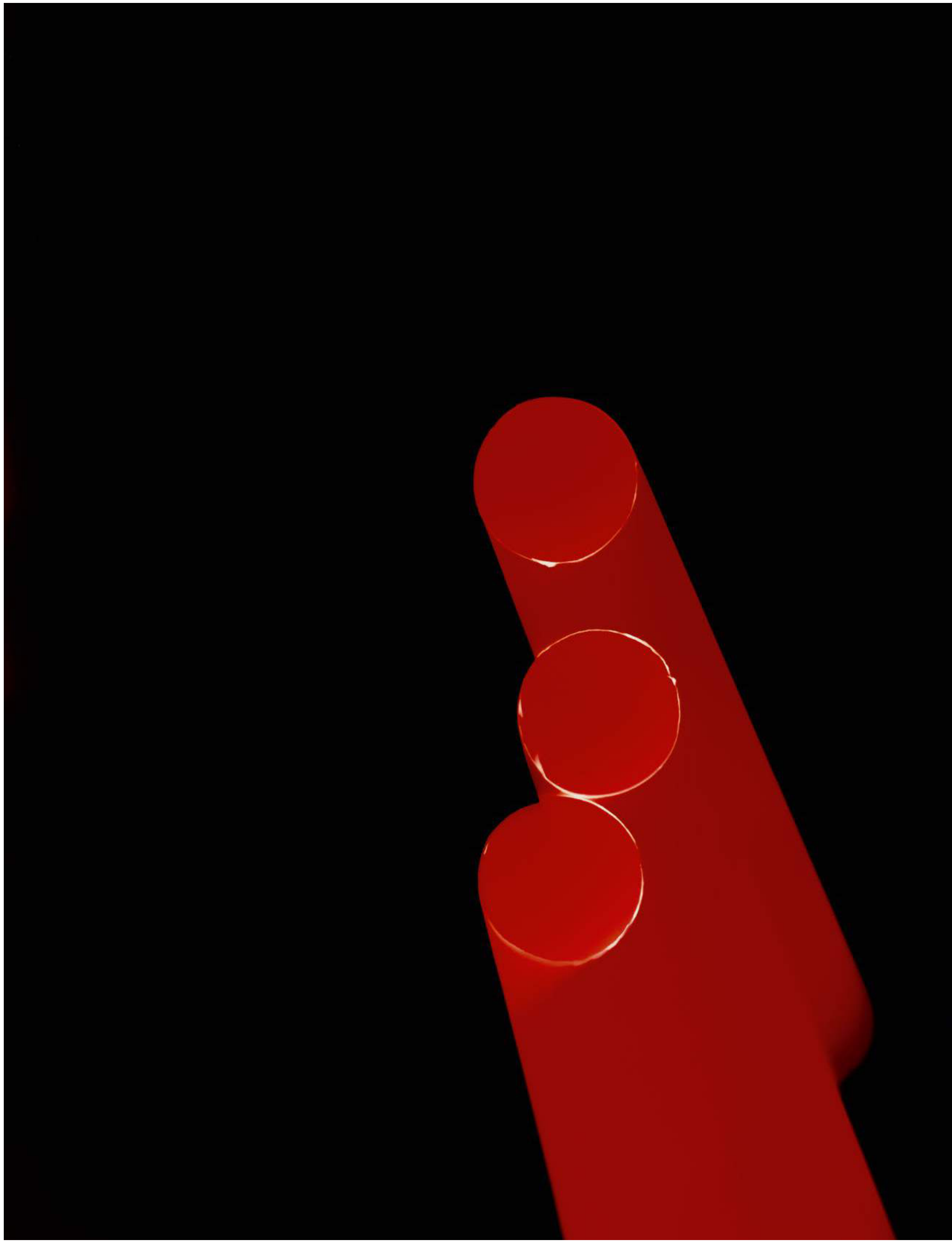
Cruise collections wouldn't traditionally be the ones that mass-market retailers (and lesser high-fashion designers) pick over for ideas to filch. It's all part and parcel of that new pre-eminence of the pre-: when they are being presented by designers of the calibre of Simons, and Ghesquière, and Miuccia Prada (who shows a pre-collection in Milan during menswear for her main line, and butts against the haute couture in Paris to present Miu Miu), you pay attention. That's a new development, too: before, pre-collections were put together by back-room teams, by people like Julie de Libran, Marc Jacobs' former right-hand woman at Louis Vuitton, who was solely responsible (and credited as such) for the house's cruise and pre-fall. She's no longer with Vuitton; she was lured away to become creative director of Sonia Rykiel, her practical and pragmatic pre-collection approach an attractive proposition for a house looking to reposition itself in the fashion firmament.

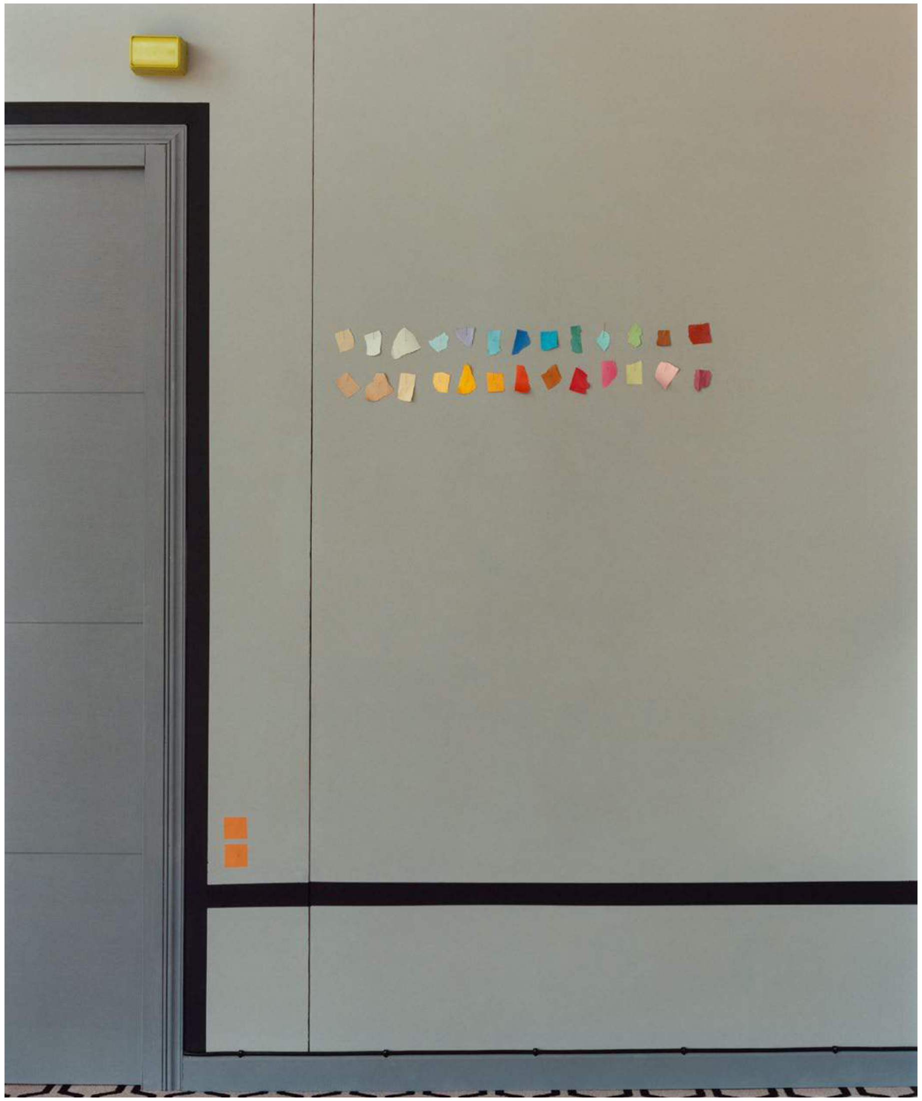
As Michael Burke at Vuitton said, pre-collections are no longer an afterthought, but a precursor. They have become the main event of the fashion calendar, both geographically (it takes a while to let the schedule settle, and figure out which far-out locale you'll be flung to next) and ideologically. You could argue that, today, everything feels like a pre-collection when you wind up touching cloth. Garments are lighter, easier, simpler and, it must be said, commercially enticing. At base, more attractive.

That should be the point of fashion, though: to get these clothes onto people's backs. Which explains the pre-eminence of the pre-collection. With or without the prefix.



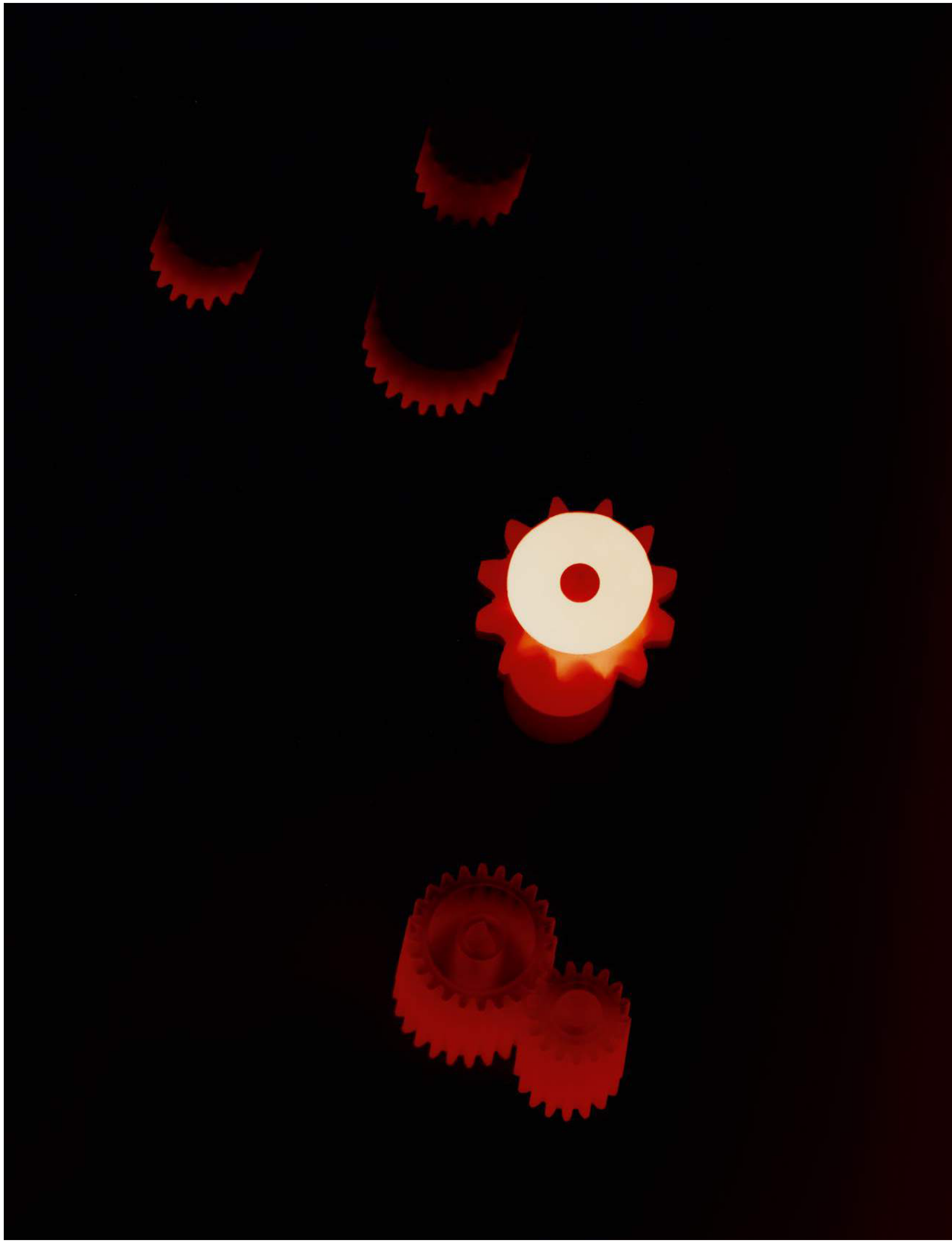
Grey ribbed dress with belt (worn as necktie) by J.W.Anderson
Blue check poplin dress (worn underneath) by Stella McCartney
Socks and shoes by Miu Miu
Bag by Burak Uyan
Earring by J.W.Anderson

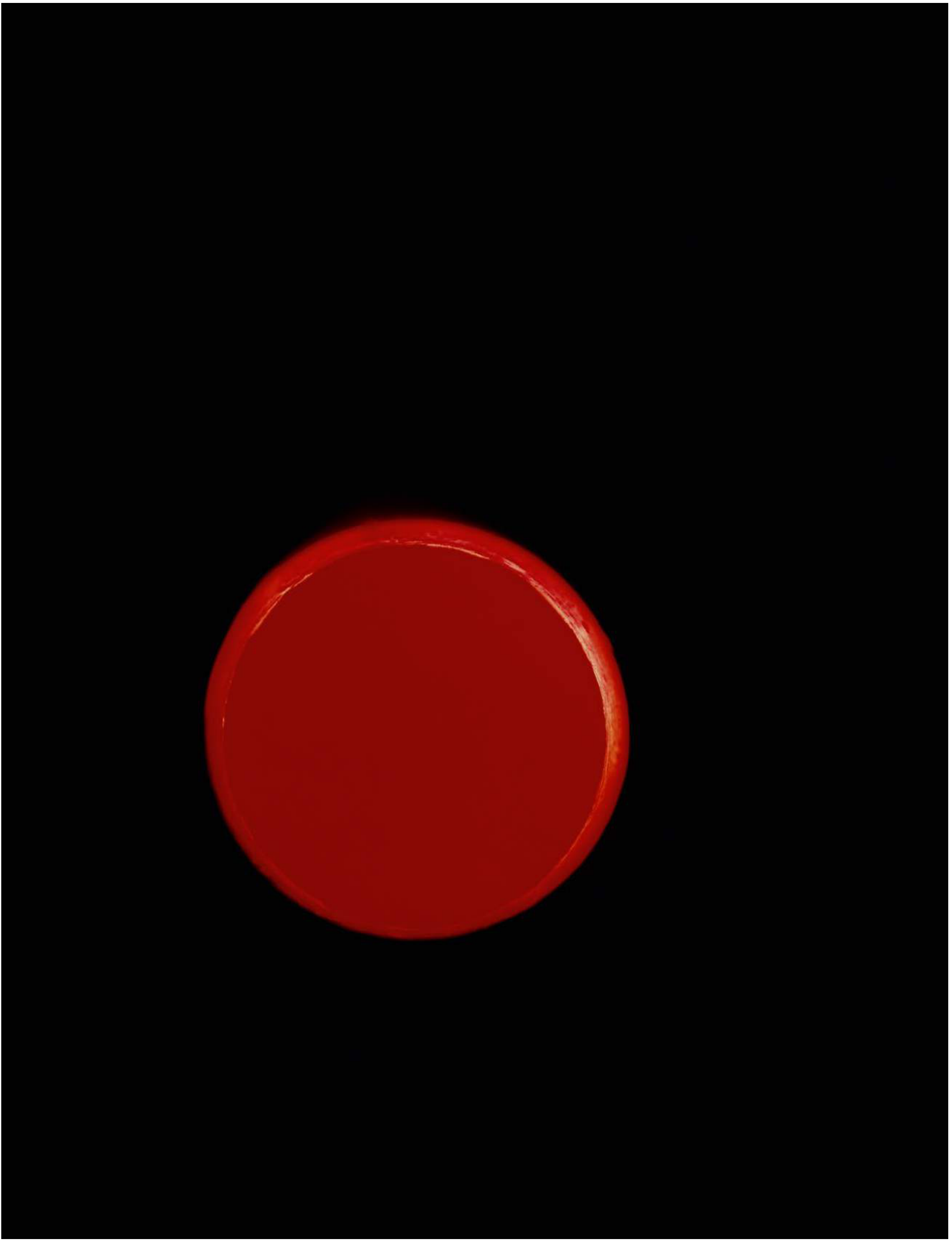




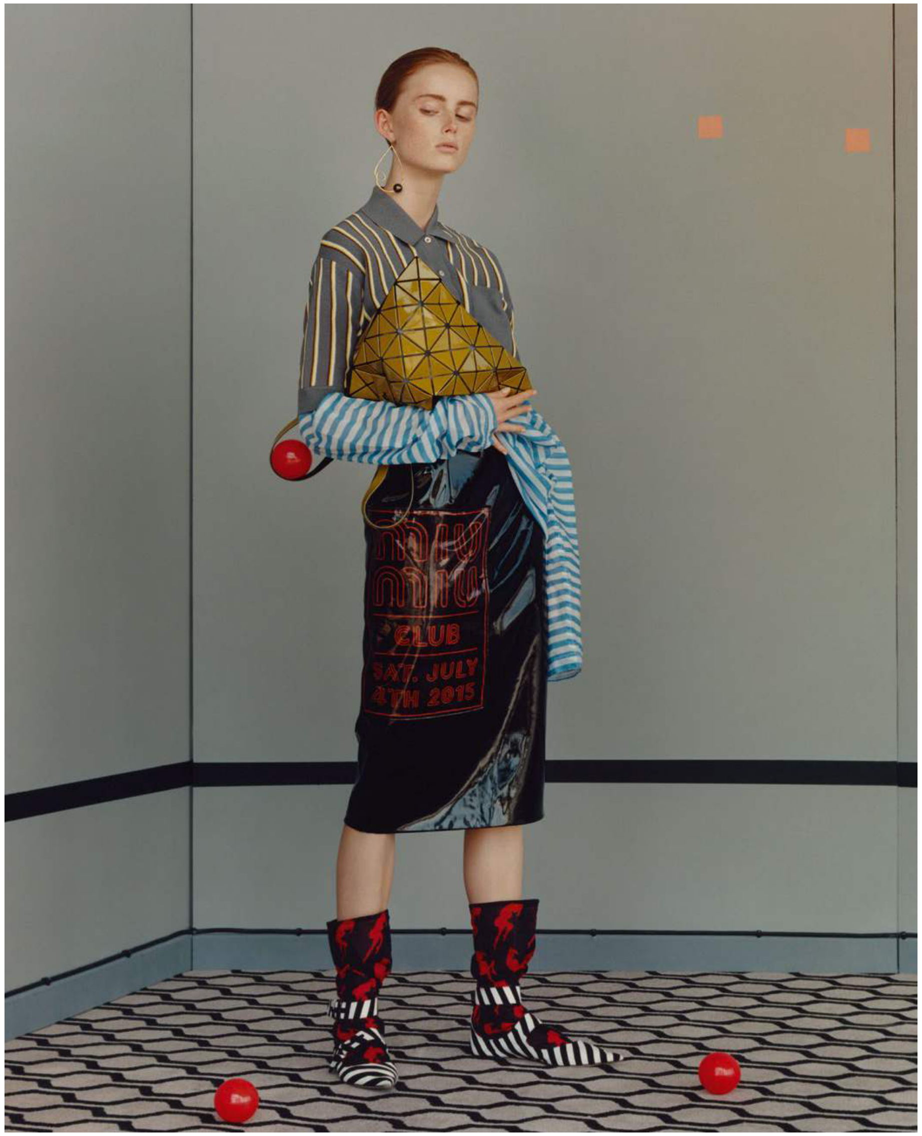
All clothing, accessories and jewellery by Céline

Black top and skirt by Paco Rabanne
Yellow knit jumper (worn underneath) by Proenza Schouler
Leather socks by Collina Strada. Shoes by Céline. Bag & earring by Paco Rabanne

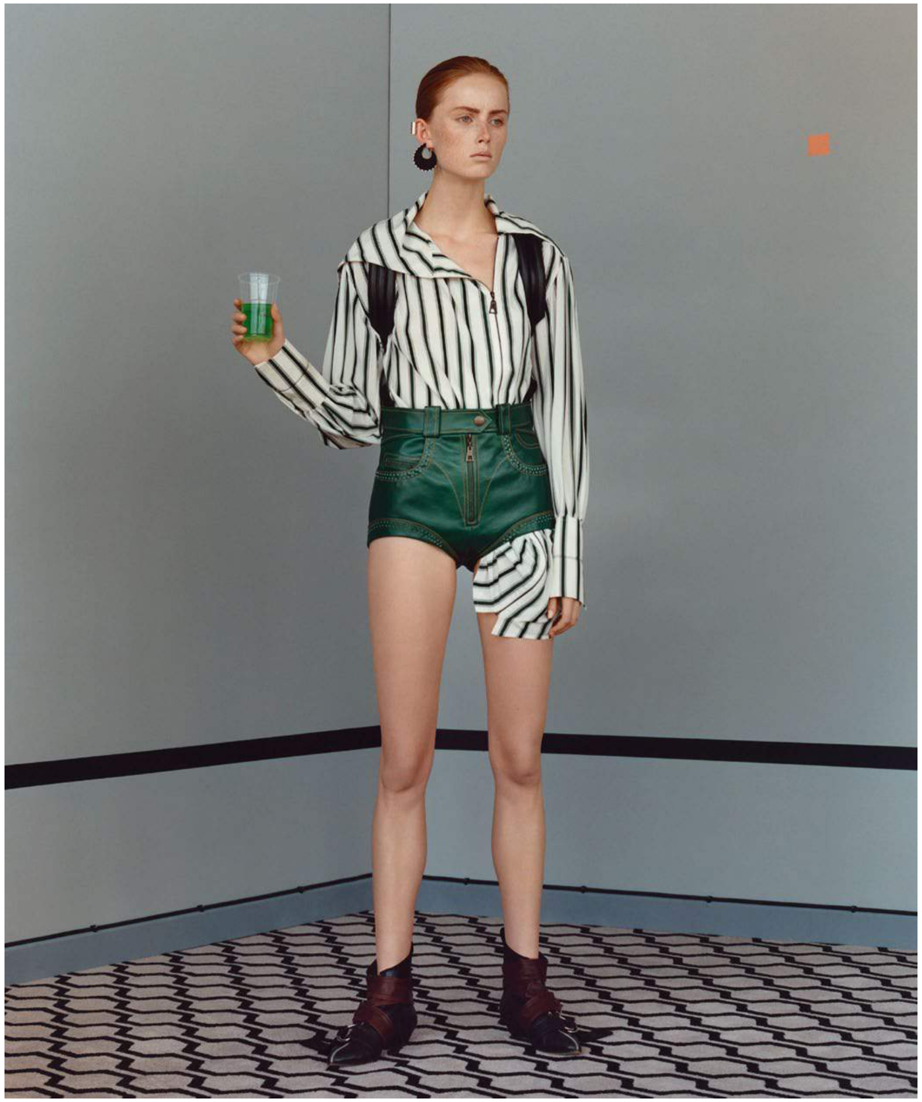




Top by Baja East
Earring (worn as clip) by Louis Vuitton
Earring by Paco Rabanne

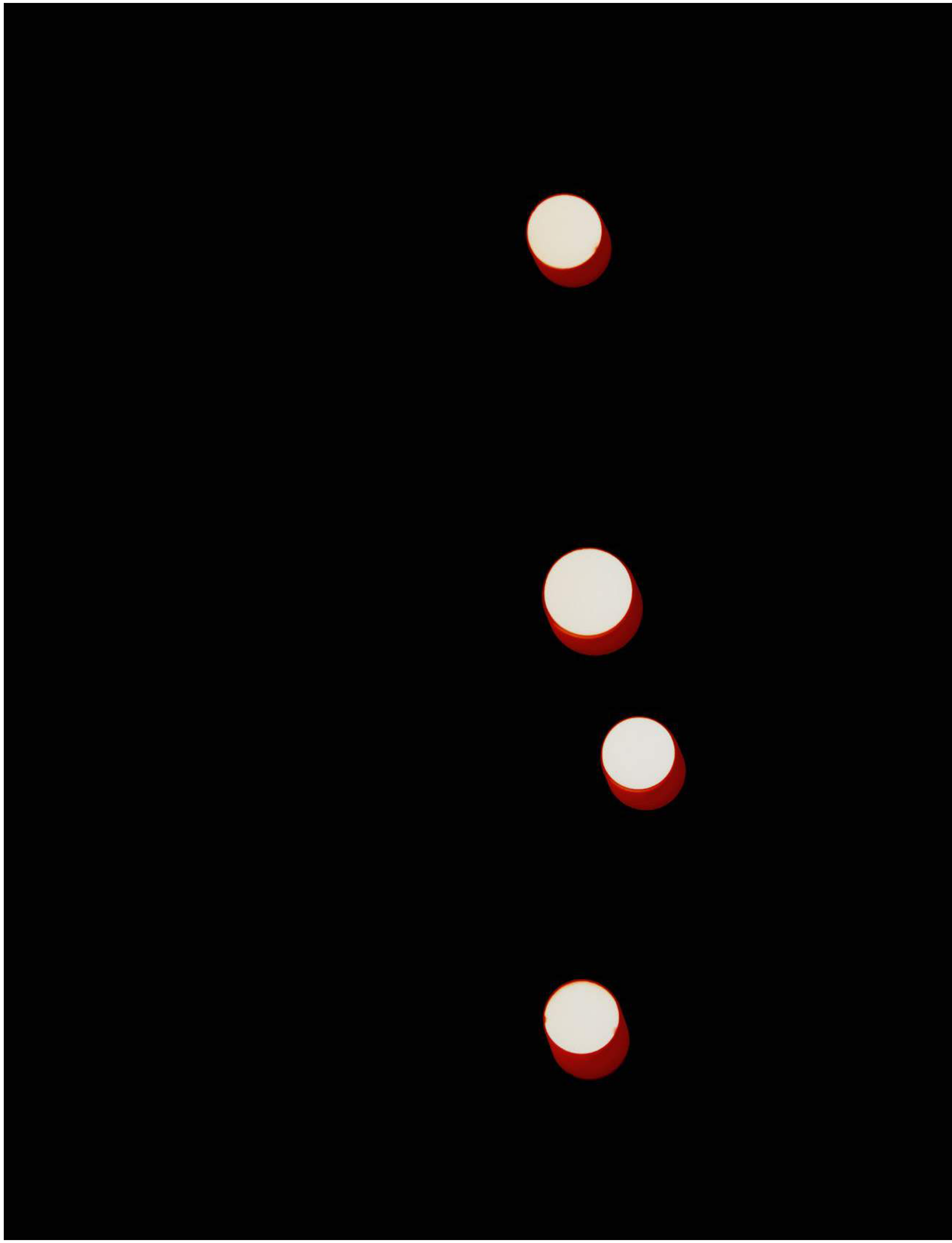


All clothing and accessories by Miu Miu
Bag by Issey Miyake
Earring by Alexis Bittar

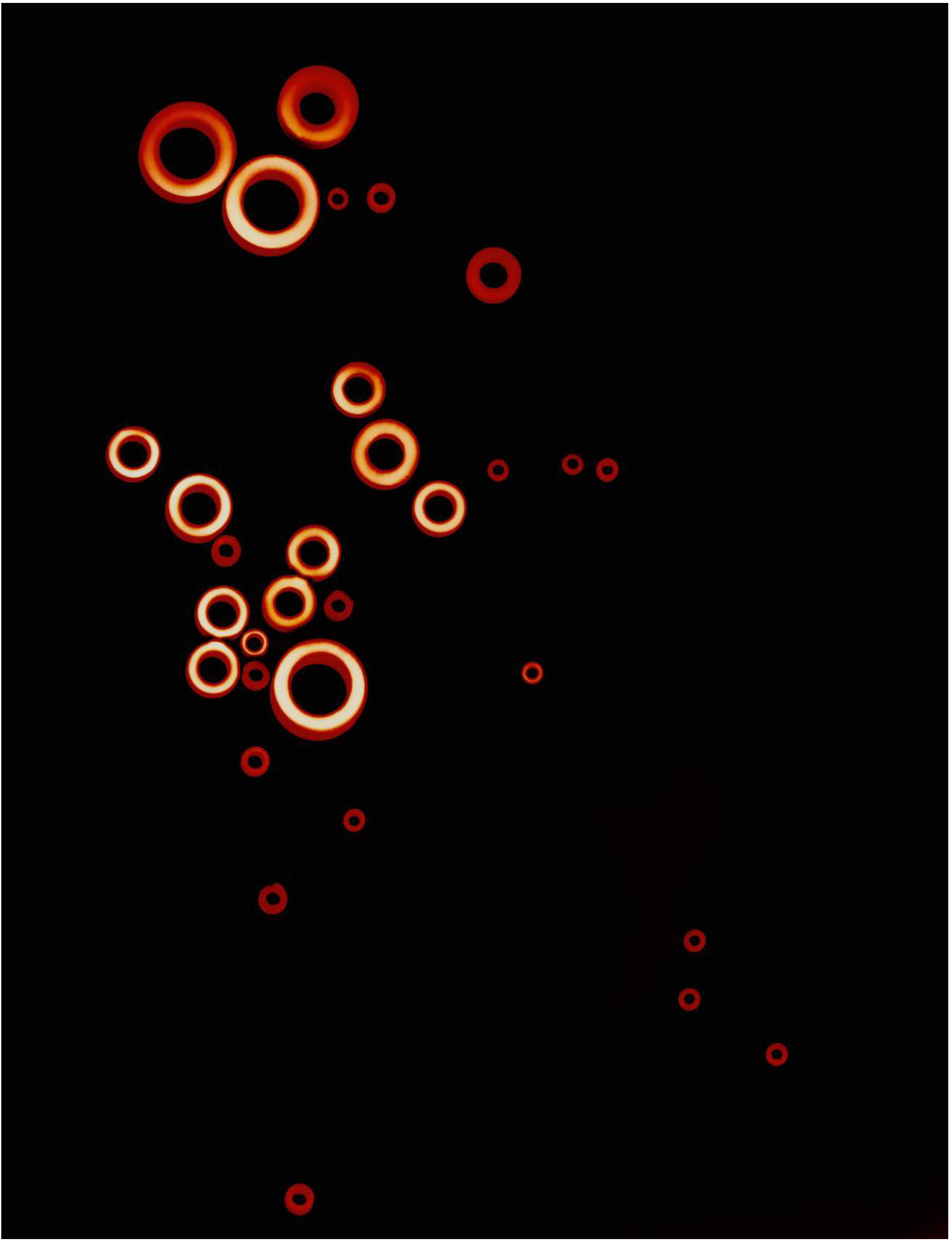


All clothing by Louis Vuitton
Shoes by Maraolo from New York Vintage
Leather straps (worn on boots) by Collina Strada
Backpack and earrings by Louis Vuitton

Coat and skirts by Christian Dior
Shoes by Louis Vuitton
Earring by J.W.Anderson

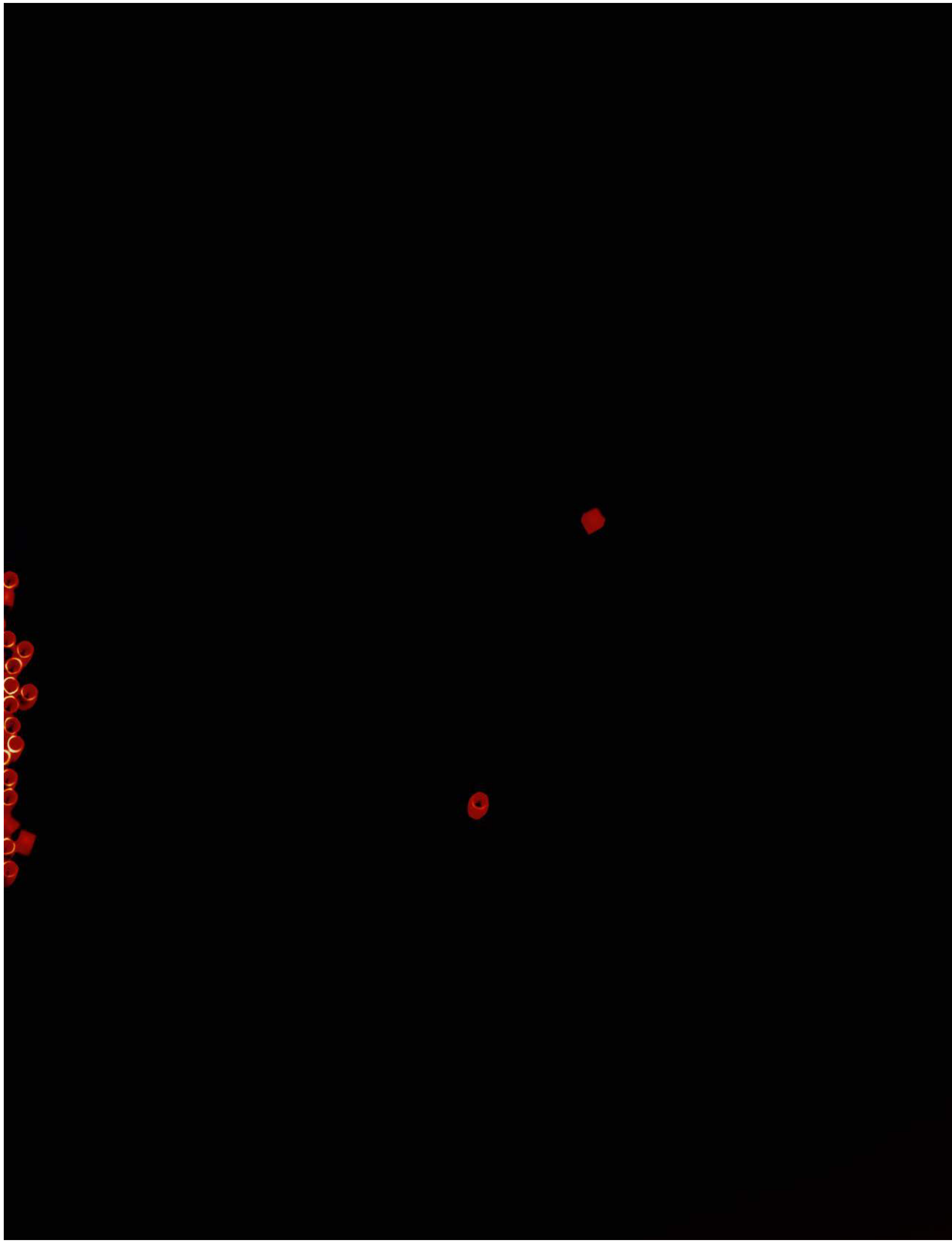


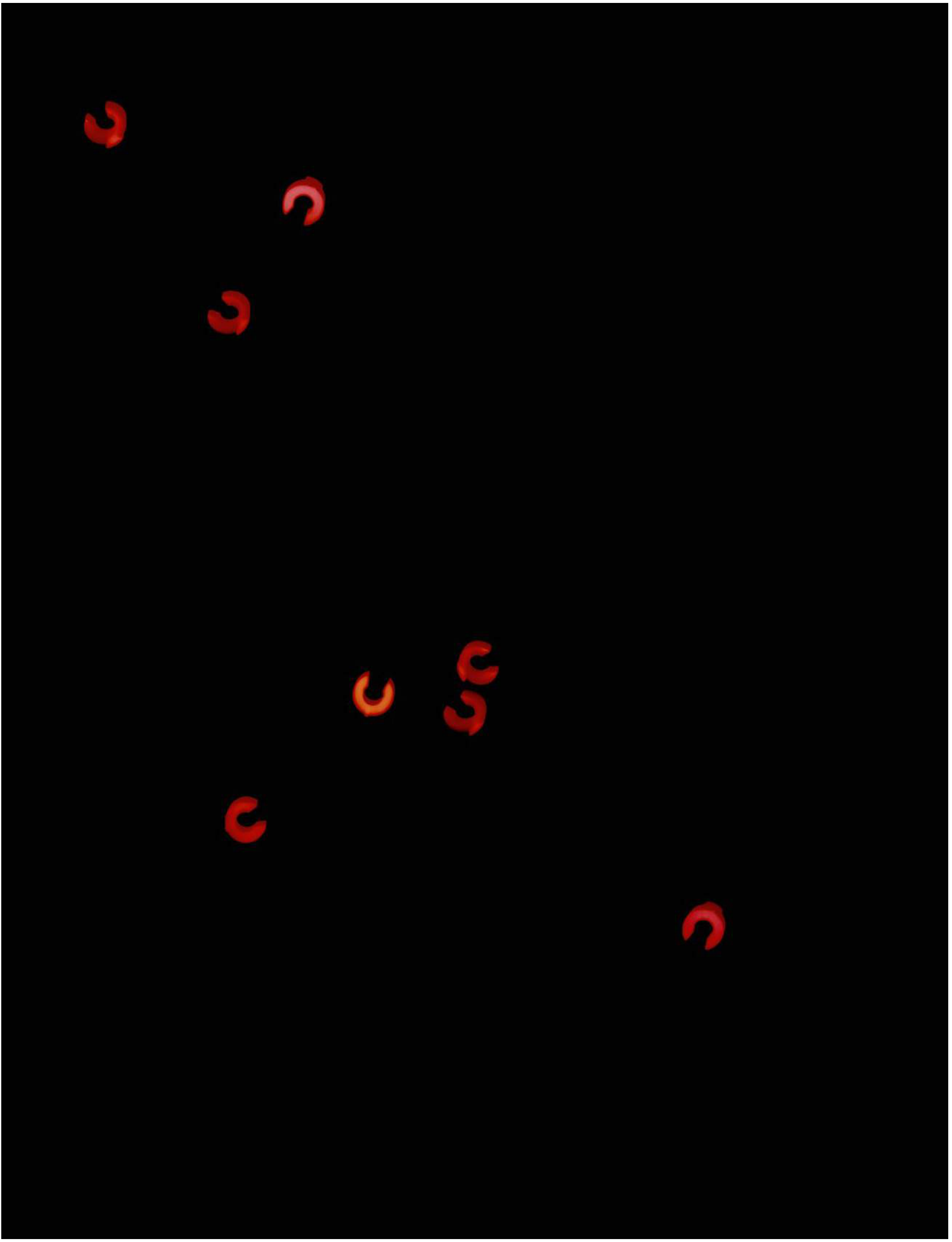
All clothing by Miu Miu
Earring by J.W.Anderson



Dress by Paco Rabanne. Shirts (worn as shirt and skirt) by Charvet
Leather socks by Collina Strada. Shoes by Maraolo from New York Vintage
Bag (on floor) by Isaac Reina. Earring by Paco Rabanne

Vintage burgundy top by Helmut Lang from the David Casavant Archive
Zebra print top (worn underneath) by Bouchra Jarrar
Skirt by Gucci. Shoes by Louis Vuitton. Bag by Jaana Parkkila
Belt by Collina Strada. Earring by J.W.Anderson





Model: Rianne Van Rompaey at Viva London. Hair: Tomohiro Ohasi c/o Management + Artists using Bumble and bumble. Make-up: Christine Corbel c/o Management + Artists using M.A.C. Manicure: Laura Forget c/o Artlist.
Set Design: Sylvain Cabouat c/o Michele Filomeno. Seamstress: Carole Savaton. Photo Assistants: Edd Horder and Tex Bishop. Styling Assistants: Rae Boxer, Marie-Valentine Girbal, Angelo DeSanto, Fanny Ourevitch and Pia Abbar.
Hair Assistant: Sayaka Otama. Make-up Assistant: Anne Amerighi. Set-design Assistants: Emmanuel Vantillard, Aurore Storny and Arthur Braillon. Production by Laura Holmes Production.

Dress and shirt by Louis Vuitton
Shoes by Maraolo from New York Vintage
Leather straps (worn on boots) by Collina Strada
Earrings by Louis Vuitton

The Saint-Germain questionnaire: Julie de Libran

By Loïc Prigent

What's your favourite street in Saint-Germain?
The Boulevard Saint-Germain.

If the Café de Flore's Club Rykiel is a club sandwich without the bread or the mayonnaise, what would the Club de Libran consist of?
Hard-boiled eggs.

What's the perfect time to be at the Café de Flore?
7pm. Aperitif time.

What's the perfect time to be at Chez Castel?
I love having dinner at 9pm at Castel, then staying to dance.

Pain au chocolat or croissant?
Pain au chocolat.

Cigar or pipe?
For me or my man?

It's said that Sonia Rykiel is both mad and a liar. Which of these qualities do you share with her?
Mad.

Which book is the Rykiel woman devouring this season?
4 décembre, Nathalie [Rykiel]'s new book.

Greco or de Beauvoir?
Greco.

Bardot or Birkin?
Birkin.

Kendall or Gigi?
Gigi.

How high should a high-heel be?
Twelve centimetres.

Why wear fur?
Out of nonchalance.

When you're doing all-night fittings, what song do you have on repeat?
Hijk by C.A.R.

What's best to drink before a Juergen Teller photo shoot in Saint-Germain?
Red wine.

What's the best design advice Marc Jacobs ever gave you?
Attention to detail.

What's the best professional advice Yves Carcelle ever gave you?
Attention to quality.

What's the best life advice Sonia Rykiel ever gave you?
Don't be afraid to say no.

What's the best advice you'd give to a woman who doesn't live in Saint-Germain?
Laugh and have fun.

Photograph by David Bailey

Eva Stenram, *Drape (Print I)*, 2014

StandardHotels.com

The Standard

JUERGEN TELLER

SERIES 3 A curated series of photography:
JUERGEN TELLER and BRUCE WEBER

Sold exclusively in Louis Vuitton stores. louisvuitton.com

LOUIS VUITTON